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SALLUST'S *HISTORIES* AND TRIUMVIRAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

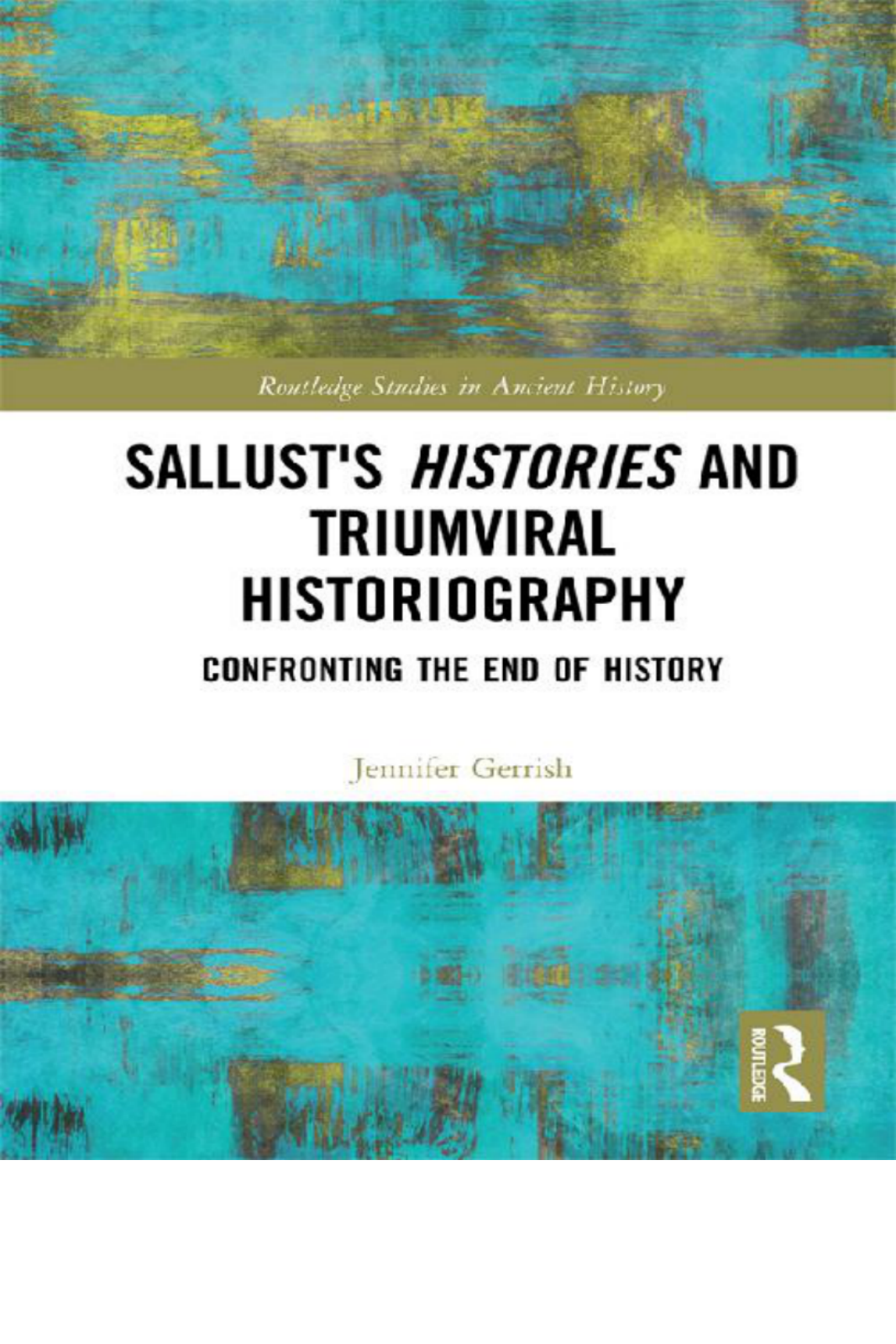
CONFRONTING THE END OF HISTORY

Jennifer Gerrish



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Sallust's *Histories* and Triumviral Historiography

Sallust's Histories and Triumviral Historiography explores the historiographical innovations of the first century Roman historian Sallust, focusing on the fragmentary *Histories*, an account of the turbulent years after the death of the dictator Sulla. The *Histories* were written during the violent transition from republic to empire, when Rome's political problems seemed insoluble and its morals hopelessly decayed. The ruling triumvirate of Octavian, Mark Antony, and Lepidus created a false sense of hope for the future, relentlessly insisting that they were bringing peace to the republic. The *Histories* address the challenges posed to historians by both civil war and authoritarian rule. What does it mean, Sallust asks, to write history under a regime that so skillfully manipulates or even replaces facts with a more favorable narrative? Historiography needed a new purpose to remain relevant and useful in the triumviral world. In the *Histories*, Sallust adopts an analogical method of historiography that enables him to confront contemporary issues under the pretext of historical narrative. The allusive *Histories* challenge Sallust's audience to parse and analyze history as it is being "written" by the actors themselves and to interrogate the relationship between words and deeds.

The first monograph in any language on the *Histories*, this book offers comprehensive reading of Sallust's third and final work, featuring discussion of a wide selection of fragments beyond the speech and letters, set-pieces that have generally been studied in isolation. It offers a valuable resource for academics and postgraduates working on ancient historiography and Latin literature more generally; it will also be of interest to ancient historians working on the late Roman Republic. With English translations of all Greek and Latin passages, this book will also be useful for undergraduate and graduate courses on historiography, Latin literature, and Roman history.

Jennifer Gerrish is Assistant Professor in the Department of Classics at the College of Charleston, USA.

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Confronting the End of History

Jennifer Gerrish

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For Sabrina and Mr. Kelly, my first writing teachers

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Introduction

History under the triumvirs

By the time the triumvirate of Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (Octavian), Marcus Antonius (Antony), and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (Lepidus) had consolidated their stranglehold on what was left of the Roman Republic, Gaius Sallustius Crispus (Sallust) was not a politician, not anymore. That world had been closed off to him since his retirement from public life around 44 BCE. His political career had been characterized more by controversy than accomplishment. As tribune, Sallust found himself entangled in the turmoil of 52 BCE, when the cronies of T. Annius Milo had murdered Milo's political rival, P. Clodius Pulcher. Rather than co-operating with Gnaeus Pompey (who had been made sole consul to address the crisis), Sallust and two of his colleagues in the tribunate contributed to the violence by fomenting popular rage against Milo. While he does not seem to have been prosecuted specifically for his actions as tribune, Sallust was expelled from the senate two years later by the censors Appius Claudius and Calpurnius Piso; the precise reason is unknown, but sources speculate about offenses ranging from extortion to adultery. He found his way into the camps of Julius Caesar during the civil war with Pompey and seems to have gained favor with the future dictator despite some noteworthy early failures as a commander. His conduct in the African War earned him the governorship of the recently incorporated province Africa Nova. Sallust seems to have taken advantage of this lucrative appointment to line his own pockets and was charged with extortion at the end of his term.

In his first work, the *War Against Catiline*, Sallust tells us that he decided to retire from politics to pursue the writing of history.¹ It is unclear whether this decision was as voluntary as he would have the reader believe; without the protection of Caesar after his assassination in 44, Sallust may have simply declined to fight the new charges against him and retired to his lavish suburban estate. In any case, he immersed himself in his new craft and by 40 or 39 BCE had produced two monographs, the aforementioned *Catiline* and the *War with Jugurtha*.² The tightly focused monograph format had allowed Sallust to develop his interests in depth, and these dense works give voice to Sallust's chief preoccupations: the decline in Roman *virtus* and concomitant rise of *ambitio* and *avaritia*, and the tension between the old nobility and the "new men." But his third project would not be another monograph. Rome had, to this point, lacked a great historian; she did not have a Herodotus, a Thucydides. Sallust was ambitious, and his early success as a writer had surely emboldened him; his next project would require a grand scale, like that of his Greek predecessors.

Meanwhile, Rome was again embroiled in civil war. In the five years since Julius Caesar's death, it seemed like everyone had a plan to rebuild the shattered republic (naturally, with themselves at its head). In 43 BCE, an unlikely combination of men installed themselves as the *triumviri rei publicae constituendae* ("triumvirs for restoring the republic") and granted themselves what amounted to autocratic powers. The arrangement brought together Lepidus, a modestly distinguished patrician, Antony, a loyal Caesarian general and friend, and Octavian, the deceased dictator's nineteen-year-old grand-nephew, who had been named in Caesar's will as his adopted son and heir. Besides their connections with Caesar, all they truly had in common was a thirst for individual power, but at least in the beginning they maintained a facade of cooperation. The triumvirs set an agenda: they would avenge Caesar's murder, they would put an end to the civil wars, and they would restore the republic. The new regime was ushered in by a series of proscriptions and land confiscations, calculated to both raise fast cash and stifle opposition. By the end of 42, Caesar's assassins had been dispatched at Philippi, but it was soon apparent that the triumvirs' second and third goals would not be attained in the near future, especially since the cohesion of the regime was constantly threatened by the triumvirs' rivalries (or flat-out antagonism toward one another). There were also other problems, like Sextus Pompey, the son of Caesar's rival Pompey. Sextus had never fallen in with the so-called Liberators, instead establishing a base in Sicily; there, he welcomed the proscribed and disrupted Rome's grain supply with his formidable fleet. In 39 or 38, the same year that Sallust probably started writing the *Histories*, the triumvirs and Sextus had reached an accord. The agreement of Misenum was

not so much a peace treaty as an intermission; the participants themselves were so pessimistic about the pact that they allegedly carried concealed daggers at the ensuing celebration. This is the climate in which Sallust began composing the *Histories*.

Perhaps just as alarming to the historian as the incessant threat of civil war was the triumvirs' relentless insistence that they were bringing peace to the Republic. On coins, in inscriptions and public pronouncements, the message was carried throughout the Roman world, but that message was a lie; it whitewashed the past and present civil wars and created a false sense of hope for the future. What did it mean, Sallust must have wondered, to write history when the triumvirs were so capable of erasing the past, and what kind of historiography was possible under a regime that was proving to be incredibly skillful at manipulating or even replacing facts with a more favorable narrative? In the twentieth century, Hannah Arendt reflected on the urge of totalitarian regimes to both efface the past (in the "mass rewriting of history") and control the narrative of the future (the creation of an "entirely fictitious world").³ The civil wars and the machinations of the triumvirs threatened to monopolize the process of constructing history. Just as Arendt suggested that truth-telling must necessarily take place outside the political sphere,⁴ Sallust was in perhaps the best position of anyone to take on the role of the guardian of historical truth. His political experience lent authority to his analysis, while his aloofness from public life created the appearance of objectivity.⁵

And so Sallust contemplated his next move. He would leave monographs behind and turn instead to annalistic history; the monographs, too, had a complex relationship with narrative and history, but the broad scale of the annalistic form would provide Sallust with a grander scope and more narrative flexibility. He would begin with Sulla's death in 78 BCE and chronicle the tumultuous years that followed Sulla's dictatorship. It was a time that bore remarkable similarities to Sallust's own day: a state destabilized by the death of a dictator and by ongoing civil strife which was sometimes simmering, sometimes boiling over, and always vehemently denied by those perpetrating it. Sallust would exploit those similarities to build his critique of the triumvirate. The *Histories* would be "about" the 70s, but they would also be *about* the triumviral years. Sallust's attack would be implicit, veiled by allusion. Perhaps the triumvirs were not to be held accountable for their violence and duplicity (and in Sallust's lifetime, they were not), but by writing the 30s into the 70s in his *Histories*, Sallust ensured that at least one biting critique of the triumvirate would make its way into the historical record.

Sallust died in 35, probably leaving his *magnum opus* unfinished. We do not know how far he planned to extend his narrative; the latest securely dateable event seems to belong to the year 67. We are uncertain about the *Histories'*

ultimate scope because, unlike the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha*, the *Histories* are fragmentary. The vagaries of manuscript transmission were unkind, and as we possess them today, the *Histories* amount to four speeches, two letters, and some 550 brief quotations preserved by ancient commentators and grammarians. The tattered state of the *Histories*' text belies its esteem in antiquity, when the work influenced and impressed Plutarch, Tacitus, and Augustine, among others. What survives to us is not necessarily what we would have chosen. Many of the fragments are brief quotations (as brief as two or three words) meant to illustrate the unexpected use of a noun case or an unusual bit of vocabulary; taken individually, these passages might seem to reveal little about the work's plot or themes. However, thanks to the diligent work of textual editors over the centuries, the majority of the fragments can be located with some certainty within the *Histories*' five books, and the overall architecture is more or less secure.

This book aims to analyze Sallust's *Histories* as a unified whole, rather than in atomistic fashion, as if it had been intentionally composed as a series of disconnected one-liners and speeches. This is a difficult task, but, as I hope to convince the reader, not an impossible one. Sallust's monographs have been studied thoughtfully and thoroughly, but any picture of "Sallust the Historian" that neglects his third and widest-ranging work is necessarily incomplete. [Chapter One](#), "Reading the *Histories*," will orient the reader to both Sallust's external and internal worlds. I will attempt to define "triumviral period" in not just political but also aesthetic terms, identifying some of the hallmarks of the literature of this period and situating Sallust among contemporary authors. I also outline the general tenets of Sallust's philosophy of history, to the extent that these may be deduced from his works. In this chapter I will also address the challenges of reading a fragmentary text and make the case for why and how I believe it is possible to read the *Histories* as a unified whole. In [Chapter Two](#), "Analogical Historiography," I outline what I believe to be Sallust's novel historiographical contribution in the *Histories*: an allusive method I term "analogical historiography." I will demonstrate this method at work using two case studies and explore some possible reasons why Sallust may have chosen to build a complex network of allegories within the *Histories*. [Chapter Three](#), "Historians in the *Histories*," examines one particular type of analogy in the *Histories*, in which Sallust uses his characters as ciphers for the figure of the historian. Through major figures of the narrative, Sallust enacts his anxieties about historiography's place in a despotic regime. In [Chapter Four](#), "Digressive Digressions," I explore Sallust's use of geographical digressions as loci for allusive criticism of contemporary politics. Specifically, the digressions on the Blessed Isles in Book One and the Strait of Messina in Book Four identify Pompey and, by analogy, Octavian, as key figures in the destruction of the

republic. In both cases, Sallust points to episodes in Pompey's career which might have turned out differently if the senate had intervened. These digressions raise the question of whether Pompey's destructive political ascent could have been forestalled, and if so, whether Octavian, whose career was swiftly unfolding in similar fashion, could still be prevented from destroying what was left of the *res publica*. In turn, the digressions also encourage us to ask whether stopping Pompey or Octavian could have prevented or slowed the dismantling of the republic, or whether human nature and Rome's self-destructive tendencies would have brought down the *res publica* in the end anyhow.

One of the central scholarly debates about Sallust is what kind of historian we should imagine him to be. On the one hand is Sallust the political pamphleteer, whose works reflected the author's abiding Caesarian partisanship. This view was popularized in the modern period by Mommsen and persisted into the twentieth century, particularly in German and Italian scholarship. At the other end of the spectrum is Sallust the withdrawn intellectual who isolated himself from the practical political sphere. Both of these readings are predicated on an assumption that Sallust was a relic of the Caesarian era who had lingered on past his time; in this formulation, Sallust ends up either looking backward to fight old battles or forward to escape into an unknown future. With this study I aim to offer a new reading of Sallust the historian as dynamically responding to the present and not, as has often been assumed, reflexively retreating to either past or future. While he no longer held elected office or actively participated in political affairs, this Sallust was by no means isolated from contemporary Rome. The Sallust presented here, on the contrary, is grounded and engaged in the present, using the craft of historiography to respond to what is actually happening around him rather than re-litigating the past or escaping into the hypothetical.

Arendt, who had so much reason to despair for the future of history and truth, found hope in the "stubbornness" and "great resiliency" of facts: "Truth, though powerless and always defeated in a head-on clash with the powers that be, possesses a strength of its own: whatever those in power may contrive, they are unable to discover or invent a viable substitute for it. Persuasion and violence can destroy truth, but they cannot replace it."⁶ Octavian won the war, and in his mature guise as the emperor Augustus spent the rest of his life fabricating a new image of himself as the *Pater Patriae*, father of the country, and reducing the narrative of his bloody rise to a few sanitized sentences in his *Res Gestae*, but Augustus could not scrub the record entirely. Sallust's indictment of the triumvirs stands as a bulwark against their energetic and manifestly false claims of peace and concord, and even today is a reminder of the durability and utility of history in the face of an oppressive regime.

Notes

- 1 *Cat.* 3.3–4.2.
- 2 There is little solid evidence on which to precisely date each of Sallust's works. The sequence is certain: the *Catiline* was first, followed by the *Jugurtha*, and finally the *Histories*. The *Catiline* postdates Caesar's death, and probably Cicero's, as well (cf. Rolfe and Ramsey 2013: xxxiii; Syme 1964: 59). Beyond this, there is little internal evidence for more specific dates. Scholars have generally assumed about two years of work for each monograph, with the *Catiline* being completed in 41 and the *Jugurtha* in 39; however, there have been numerous challenges to the dates of both monographs based on a variety of criteria, and the dates I have given here represent a loose consensus at best. For the present discussion, I assume an approximate start date for the *Histories* of 39 BCE, but it would not materially change my argument should that date be moved up or down by a year.
- 3 Arendt 1976: 262.
- 4 Arendt 1968: 259 "To look upon politics from the perspective of truth, as I have done here, means to take one's stand outside the political realm. This standpoint is the standpoint of the truth-teller, who forfeits his position – and with it, the validity of what he has to say – if he tries to interfere directly in human affairs and to speak the language of persuasion or violence."
- 5 Cf. the preface of the *Catiline*, in which Sallust credits himself with freedom from expectation, fear, and political partisanship (*mihi a spe, metu, partibus rei publicae animus liber erat*, *Cat.* 4.2)
- 6 Arendt 1968: 259.

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1 Reading the *Histories*

This chapter is an introduction to the experience of reading Sallust's *Histories*. It provides an orientation to Sallust's triumviral world: to the political and literary contexts in which he composed the *Histories* and to his own self-positioning as a historian in that world. The triumviral period is a fascinating slice of history both politically and aesthetically; what looks to us, in retrospect, like a bridge between republic and empire could not have appeared that way to contemporaries. It was increasingly apparent that the republic might never again function as it had in the past (or as Romans liked to believe it had once functioned) and no one could yet know that the current generation was to be the last generation of the civil wars. The literature produced during this period is unique and complex, and its traditional categorization as either "republican" or "Augustan" elides its distinctive qualities (many of which the *Histories* share). First, however, I will address one of the more practical challenges to reading and interpreting the *Histories*: its fragmentary state. The condition of the text has long been a deterrent to readers, but with the 2015 publication of Ramsey's Loeb edition and English translation of the fragments the *Histories* have never been so accessible to a wide audience.¹ If we approach the text with appropriate interpretive caution, it may be time for Sallust's *magnum opus* to finally receive the attention it deserves.

I Reading fragments

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to address the textual elephant in the room: the *Histories* are a fragmentary text. While the monographs are the subject of a vast and wide-ranging body of scholarship, the *Histories* have been comparatively neglected. This is surely due to the fragmentary state of the text rather than an intrinsic lack of interest. Sallust's narrative of the 70s and 60s is our most contemporary account of that period, and the events of the post-Sulla years – foreign conflicts, civil discord, rumbles of looming societal change –

provided Sallust ample material to exercise his talents; from what we possess, it is clear that this was a masterpiece.² Nevertheless, La Penna's studies from the 1960s are, to date, the only large-scale, holistic treatments of the *Histories*.³ La Penna is one of the great readers of Sallust and these works remain essential pieces of the conversation about Sallust. Far from hoping to eclipse La Penna's valuable work with the present study, I hope rather to complement it. While La Penna was interested in Sallust's role as a political thinker concerned with the role of class struggles in the breakdown of the republic,⁴ I am drawn more to Sallust the self-conscious historian, and my study thus focuses on his views about the nature and purpose of historiography and how his historiographical method responds to the disorder of civil war, topics which have gone largely unexplored in the context of the *Histories*. Beyond La Penna's studies, the majority of scholarly work on the *Histories* has fallen into one of two categories: the arrangement and editing of the fragments and discussion of the speeches and letters. The former category is not a principal concern of this study; I will discuss the collocation of particular fragments when relevant but rely for the most part on the expertise of the editors who have shaped "our" version of the *Histories*. Much of the work in the latter category is excellent and has offered great insight into the *Histories*; individual contributions will be discussed throughout this book when we turn to the speeches and letters. However, the overall impact of this corpus of scholarship is weakened by its aversion to drawing conclusions about the *Histories* as a whole. Sallust surely did not write the four speeches and two letters as set-pieces, meant to be read in isolation, and we do the author and the work an injustice if we treat it that way.

That said, the process of reading and interpreting a work like the *Histories* is without a doubt complex. In the *Histories'* case, the challenge is compounded by the fact that nearly all of the surviving text (essentially, everything but the speeches and letters) has been handed down in brief quotations by grammarians, mostly three lines or fewer in length. In many cases, passages have been preserved for their stylistic, lexical, syntactic, or etymological interest and may not reflect the major themes and plot points of the narrative. But if we make the most of what we *do* have, even the briefest fragments can richly repay careful study. The reader of the *Histories* has three distinct advantages. First, the quantity of fragments and the quality of the available editions; second, our familiarity with Sallust as an author; and third, the availability of later texts that used the *Histories* as a source. I will rely on all three of these advantages throughout my discussion of the fragments in the following chapters.

The large number of fragments we possess and the diligence with which they have been curated by modern editors present our first great advantage.

Given the general hesitance to approach the *Histories*, one would imagine that we are dealing with a prohibitively scanty amount of text. In fact, over 500 fragments of the *Histories* survive. To put this in perspective, we have just over 600 fragments of Ennius' *Annales*, a work that has received much more attention from scholars. Although many of the *Histories*' fragments are brief (three lines or fewer), there are also many substantial ones; however, rigorous philological analysis of even the shortest fragments pays dividends. It is also in our favor that the architecture of the *Histories* is fairly secure; while editors have found cause to tinker with the arrangement of the fragments, the overall macro-structure of Maurenbrecher's standard edition has been more or less retained. Maurenbrecher's arrangement has held up well in large part due to the quality of the testimonia on which it is based. While the grammarians did not always single out the passages that modern readers may wish they had, they were usually diligent in citing book numbers and often preserved other important contextual information as well.⁵ We may thus be reasonably confident that, when Sallust died, the *Histories* consisted of five books composed in annalistic style⁶ and that the sequence of major events as modern editors have restored it is generally accurate.⁷

Our second advantage is that we *know* Sallust. The fragments of the *Histories* are not the tantalizing but inscrutable traces of an otherwise unknown author. Sallust's first two works, the monographs about Catiline and Jugurtha, are extant and securely attributed to Sallust. They are compact; the entire Sallustian corpus, including the remnants of the *Histories*, totals around 50,000 words.⁸ Still, the monographs represent a virtual treasure trove of information unavailable to scholars of many other fragmentary authors. From these texts we are deeply familiar with Sallust's syntax, lexical choices, themes, and rhetoric, and our interpretation of the *Histories* benefits from the existence of this framework. We must remain open-minded about stylistic and ideological evolution (or inconsistency) through Sallust's career and the generic differences between monographs and annalistic history; still, with the use of reasonable caution we can use what we know from the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* to make informed inferences about the language and ideas of the *Histories* (as I shall do at various points in the following chapters). We are also broadly familiar with Sallust's troubled political career, as several ancient sources fill in the blanks between Sallust's own oblique references to his turbulent experience in public life.⁹ The extent to which this influences a reading of the *Histories* is up to the individual critic. Sallust's political biography will not play a large role in my discussion of the work here, but the information exists for those who wish to consider it.

Finally, later works that used the *Histories* as a source can help us sketch a more complete picture of Sallust's narrative. Authors in antiquity probably

would have had access to the complete text; while other historical narratives of the 70s and 60s besides the *Histories* would have been available (like Livy's), Sallust's narrative would have been the one composed closest in time to that period.¹⁰ It is reasonable, then, to posit the *Histories* as a possible source for later works covering the same time period: for example, the relevant books of Livy,¹¹ Appian, and Cassius Dio.¹² Plutarch is especially helpful, as he seems to have relied on the *Histories* as main source for the *Lives* of Crassus, Lucullus, Pompey, and Sertorius; a robust body of scholarship catalogues correspondences between the two authors and examines Plutarch's use of sources, including Sallust.¹³ Maurenbrecher made extensive use of Plutarch in his organization of the fragments. While my task here is not to reconstruct the overall architecture of the work (since this has been ably accomplished by others), sources like Plutarch will be useful for reconstructing the details of specific episodes. A note of caution on using Plutarch in this way: while Plutarch's biographies may be useful for reconstructing the form and content of Sallust's narrative, it is important that we not assume a correspondence between Plutarch's and Sallust's attitudes toward their common characters, especially in light of the different generic imperatives of history and biography. This has been a pitfall of much of the existing scholarship of the *Histories*, since previous approaches to the work have often focused on Sallust's evaluation of individual figures: did he admire Sertorius? Was Spartacus heroic? Was Pompey the villain? These questions are not central to my reading of the *Histories*, and where I do consider Sallust's personal estimation of individual figures (his view of Pompey will be a recurring theme), I will hew as closely as possible to the fragments themselves and avoid the temptation to draw overly broad conclusions from Plutarch.

The fragments of the *Histories* and the supporting material described here give us a great deal to work with. Scholars are divided on whether and how we should try to fill in the remaining gaps. Gumbrecht articulates the dilemma:

[T]he active use of the imagination appears to be as necessary for the restitution of texts from fragments as the self-control of the philological work by standards of academic rationality... . On the other hand, we can never be sure whether we manage to completely eliminate all those heterogeneous traces which the unavoidable use of our imagination may have left in the restituted text.¹⁴

It is important to recognize the challenges posed by fragmentary evidence and to try to avoid aggressive or fanciful reconstructions.¹⁵ However, no less a critic than Syme was optimistic about the potential for the *Histories*' recovery: "In these diverse ways, the lost masterpiece becomes palpable – content, architecture, and tone. Moreover, since the grammarians frequently cite the books by their numbers, erudition can combine with imagination to

reconstruct both the outline and the detail of sundry notable transactions. That scholars should be found divergent is no proof that the method is vain and delusive.”¹⁶ By extracting as much as possible from each word of our fragments and supplementing them with our other sources of knowledge about the *Histories*, it is possible to say a great deal more about this work than most scholars have been willing to risk.

II Sallust’s triumviral world: between republic and empire

This project takes for granted that the “triumviral period” is a discrete, unique period bridging the years between the end of the republic and the establishment of the Augustan principate. While the periodization of political or literary history is inevitably artificial, it provides a convenient and arguably necessary framework.¹⁷ Periodization requires that we impose a structure which would be unrecognizable to those living during the years in question. For example, how can one recognize their own time as “transitional” or as a prelude to some other period? Those living under the triumviral regime could not have known that the chaos around them would give way to a system of one-man rule, or that the new monarchy would endure for generations, or that Rome would enjoy a respite from civil war. In fact, as we shall see, the despair that Rome was doomed to endless violence is one of the defining features of the literature of this period.

Despite being relatively well-documented,¹⁸ the triumviral years have tended to get short shrift in both publications and classrooms, in part because this period fits awkwardly in the traditional schema of monarchy-republic-empire.¹⁹ For example, the *Cambridge Ancient History* series uses the death of Cicero in 43 as the point of demarcation between the “Last Age of the Roman Republic” and the “Augustan Empire.”²⁰ The editors of Volume 9 argue that “Cicero’s death symbolizes, now as it did then, the death of the republic,” and so marks the appropriate end of their volume; a chapter on the triumviral period opens Volume 10, although it is difficult (and the editors do not try) to make the case that the years under the triumvirate can be said to belong to the “Augustan Empire.” In a work of such large chronological scope, divisions are necessarily made with a chainsaw, not a scalpel, and a period of less than fifteen years probably does not warrant its own volume; however, in this project I have the freedom (and obligation) to draw finer distinctions.

Another difficulty in defining the triumviral period is identification of its beginning and end points. For the purposes of this project, I will use Julius Caesar’s death in March 44 BCE to mark the beginning of the triumviral

period. Although the triumvirate was not formally established until November 43, I would argue that the chaotic months between Caesar's assassination and the passage of the *lex Titia* (the law enacting the triumvirate) share more in common with the turbulent years that followed than with the months leading up to Caesar's death and that it is thus reasonable to include them in this discussion. The death of Sallust in 35 BCE provides us with a practical *terminus ante quem* for this project and conveniently rescues us from the thorny debate over where to mark the beginning of the principate.

Events

A full recounting of the events of the triumviral period is neither necessary nor desirable here; others have done this well, with different goals and methods.²¹ However, I do want to "set the stage" for our discussion of the *Histories* by briefly reviewing the political landscape at the time Sallust began writing his third and final work, probably in 39 or 38 BCE,²² and the major events and changes that took place over the course of its composition. Sallust died in 35 without having completed the *Histories*. He thus did not live to see the outcome of the triumviral period and did not know that the civil wars would not, in fact, continue ceaselessly; he knew nothing of the Donations of Alexandria or Actium or the deaths of Mark Antony and Cleopatra or Octavian's triumphant return to Rome. These events were so momentous as to seem, in hindsight, nearly inevitable, but of course this is not so. Since the discussions in this book will focus on Sallust's critique of contemporary politics, it will be important to remain aware of the limits of Sallust's experience; the following brief survey is thus meant as a reminder of what Sallust knew and did not know when he composed the *Histories*.

When Sallust began writing the *Histories*, Rome had experienced five years of turmoil, bitter partisanship, and swift and often violent change. The death of Julius Caesar in 44 was no doubt a dramatic moment for Sallust, who had served under Caesar in his war against Pompey and who had enjoyed Caesar's protection during an inglorious political career.²³ After Caesar's death, Sallust held no further office; it was probably at this time he took to writing history with the *Catiline*. The formal establishment of the triumvirate in November 43 vested Octavian, Mark Antony, and Lepidus with essentially autocratic powers. The swift enactment of land confiscations and proscriptions immediately made clear that the new government would be ruthlessly self-serving. For example, despite his earlier support of Octavian, the young triumvir easily offered up Cicero's life as a bargaining chip to his colleague Antony, and the erstwhile "savior of the republic" was proscribed. Cicero was one of the triumvirate's first casualties, and his death was surely alarming to

Sallust, whatever their differences in literary aesthetic or philosophy of history. Sallust did not participate in any of the campaigns that followed Caesar's death; he was not at Mutina or Philippi and seems not to have aligned himself openly with any active factions. The Perusine War of 41–40 is the last major event before Sallust began work on the *Histories*, and as will be discussed in the next chapter, this uprising is pointedly invoked by Sallust.

Rome's political landscape remained unstable into 38 BCE, the latest point at which Sallust probably began the *Histories*. The third triumvir, Lepidus, had been unofficially nudged out by Octavian and Antony in the Treaty of Brundisium in September 40. The agreement at Brundisium left him with little role to play, as he was consigned to the province of Africa; Octavian and Antony redistributed provinces between themselves and affirmed their friendship with a marriage alliance (Antony to Octavian's sister Octavia). The treaty was celebrated with ovations and commemorative coins depicting *Concordia*, but one can imagine Sallust's unease. The pattern was familiar: a ruling triumvirate is established, one member is eliminated, and the remaining two lead factions into civil war. Sallust had experienced this first-hand during the so-called First Triumvirate and had depicted a similar breakdown in the *Jugurtha*, in which Jugurtha orchestrates the assassination of Hiempsal and swiftly mobilizes against Adherbal. However, while Lepidus may not have been an obstacle to an ultimate showdown between Antony and Octavian, another threat remained; Sextus Pompey continued to grow in influence and could no longer be ignored. The son of Pompey had never cast his lot in with Caesar's assassins, as they had hoped and as might have been expected. Remaining in the west (first Spain, then Sicily) he had amassed a formidable fleet and used it to interfere with Italy's grain supply, putting immense pressure on the triumvirs to deal with him. The Treaty of Misenum formally granted Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Peloponnese to Sextus, as well as an augurship and future consulship, provided he cease his "piratical" activities. Plutarch claims that one of Sextus' lieutenants suggested assassinating Octavian and Antony at the after-party; Appian relates a similar anecdote and also tells us that the participants had so little faith in this pact that everyone attended the concluding celebration secretly armed.²⁴ A climate of high tension, deep unease, and dubious claims of *concordia* thus formed the backdrop for the *Histories*' inception.

During the final years of Sallust's life, while he was at work on the *Histories*, Rome's situation did not improve, and in fact may have appeared steadily grimmer from Sallust's perspective. The flimsiness of the treaties of Brundisium and Misenum was soon obvious to all. Sextus resumed his harassment of the coast and waterways almost immediately, and the fault lines dividing the triumvirs were becoming even more pronounced. Despite the

formal renewal of the triumvirate in 37, it was increasingly clear that Lepidus was the odd man out and that resentment between Octavian and Antony was growing. Antony had disappeared to the East, and Octavian was preoccupied with his escalating conflict with Sextus. It is likely that Sallust was aware of Sextus' defeat at Naulochus in September of 36, as Octavian returned to Rome and celebrated an *ovatio* in November of that year. However, Sextus' fate was unclear; he had escaped to the east after Naulochus, and it may have been after Sallust's death that he was finally caught and executed on Antony's orders. Lepidus' fate, on the other hand, was well-known; stripped of his triumviral office, he had been exiled to Circeii for his attempt to depose Octavian after Naulochus. As for Antony, news of his disastrous Parthian campaign had presumably reached Rome by the winter of 36/5.

This, then, was the state of the field when Sallust died. The "Liberators" were long extinguished, and Lepidus was living as a private citizen. Sextus' status was unknown; his infantry had surrendered, but he was resourceful and had clawed his way back from other defeats. Antony's military reputation had been diminished by the defeat in Parthia, but due to his alliance with Cleopatra he still had ample forces at his disposal. Octavian's stock was on the rise in Italy after his victory over Sextus, and Antony's dalliance with Cleopatra was providing him with rich fodder for a propaganda campaign assailing Antony's "un-Roman" activities. Above all, Sallust died with no idea whether the civil wars would persist for another year or another hundred years. Even if Sextus had been eliminated, the conflict between Octavian and Antony would not be resolved peacefully; once one or the other was eliminated, after so many years of discord there was no reason not to expect another internecine conflict to emerge in turn. As we shall see in the next section, anxiety over this apparent endlessness of civil war is one of the hallmarks of the corpus of "triumviral literature."

Triumviral literature?

While scholars are increasingly amenable to acknowledging the triumviral period as a discrete unit in Roman political history, it has not been recognized likewise in literary periodization. Cicero and Vergil have long served as immovable anchors for the literature of the republic and the Empire. Although his observation did not lead to a restructuring of literary periodization, Syme recognized long ago that the triumviral period produced a body of literature that is difficult to assimilate with either late republican or early imperial literature;²⁵ it is worth noting that Syme cited Sallust as a specific example of an author whose career is ill-placed in either period.²⁶ Scholars have been slow to adopt Syme's argument, and most handbooks of

Latin literature still absorb the triumviral years into either the late republic or early imperial period.²⁷ However, some have begun to recognize, as Syme did, that the literature of the triumviral period is rich and varied and that this literature is unified by shared themes and fixations.²⁸ The specter of civil war is one of the central themes of triumviral literature, and works from this period are often steeped in anxiety and fear. What is especially “triumviral” is a creeping sense of hopelessness and the dawning realization that peace might not be just over the horizon after all, but that continuous internecine strife might in fact be Rome’s “new normal”:

Creating a “Triumviral Period” of literature brings into focus specific themes that occur throughout the history of these fifteen years – the disgust felt at the meteoric careers of social upstarts, for instance, or the fear that Rome’s men were losing their manliness. More generally, its often somber tone – its sense, above all, that Rome’s problems might be totally insoluble – offers a contrast to the more muted pessimism of late Republic literature. Triumviral literature is full of dashed expectations and wasted effort.²⁹

While a comprehensive treatment of triumviral literature is not possible here, a brief survey of some of the shared features of extant works will illustrate Osgood’s apt description of this corpus.

Several of the major works composed during these years have not survived (for example, Asinius Pollio’s history and Varius’ tragedies), but the body of extant triumviral literature is rich and complex. The surviving works are diverse in form and content and yet linked together by their shared preoccupations with the evils of civil war and a general sense of hopeless resignation. It is noteworthy that the surviving poetry of this period belongs to poets whose careers would blossom under the patronage of Maecenas and Augustus: Vergil, Horace, and Propertius. Unlike the properly “Augustan” works, the poetry of the triumviral period seems more interested in lamenting the present condition than attempting to repair or forge a sense of Roman identity. Although later on Vergil would become inextricably linked with Augustus and the prosperous new age, at times his early works verge on the utterly despondent. Vergil’s hometown Mantua was targeted during the land confiscations, and tradition holds that Vergil’s family estate was among those affected. Probably composed between 42 and 39 BCE, the *Eclogues* (poems 1 and 9 in particular) depict the sense of loss and displacement that accompanied the economic and practical damage caused by the confiscations:

At nos hinc alii sitientis ibimus Afros,
pars Scythiam et rapidum Cretae veniemus Oaxen
et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.
En umquam patrios longo post tempore finis,
pauperis et tuguri congestum caespitem culmen
post aliquot, mea regna videns, mirabor aristas?

Impius haec tam culta novalia miles habebit,
barbaras has segestes? En quo discordia civis
produxit miseros: his nos consevimus agros. (*Ecl.* 1.64–72)

But we must go hence, some to the parched Africans, some to the fierce Oaxes on Crete, and to the Britons, entirely cut off from the whole world. Alas, will I ever, long from now, behold the borders of my country, the roof of my hut, built with sod – will I, long from now, seeing my kingdom, behold the harvest? Will some godless soldier have these well-tilled fallows? A barbarian these crops? Behold, to what point civil discord has led its unhappy citizens: for these men we have sown our fields.³⁰

The tragedy of the land confiscations is presented not merely the loss of property, but the loss of identity, as well. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the threat to national or community identity is a traumatizing aspect of civil war. Vergil's displaced farmer embodies this identity crisis in a most literal sense, because he is to be forcibly ejected from his homeland; however, even those who remained in Rome or Italy were forced to confront the schism between citizen groups and the trauma of suddenly being viewed as *hostes* by neighbors and friends. It is worth noting that the hopelessness of Menalcas is somewhat counterbalanced by Tityrus' relief at the restoration of his property by the anonymous young "*deus*." We might read this as a sign of hope that, for some, all is not lost; however, it is also a reminder that under the triumvirs, fortunes are determined by the whims of a few capricious men. While the *Georgics*, completed in 29, have been seen as more optimistic than the *Eclogues*,³¹ Vergil still alludes in this poem to the triumvirs' other violent fund-raising program, the proscriptions, and the conflicts between Rome and Italy that plagued the triumviral years.³²

Horace, too, composed his earliest works during these years, writing the *Epodes* between 41 and 30 and publishing the first book of his *Satires* around 35. Biographical tradition holds that Horace, like Vergil, also had a personal connection to the famous events of the triumviral period; he fought on the side of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi. The *Epodes*, in particular, openly confront the civil war and triumviral politics. *Epode* 7 laments Rome's urge to self-destruction, and Horace (or, rather, the poem's speaker) chastises his fellow Romans: were they to fulfill the hopes of their enemies by annihilating themselves? The poem's concluding lines point to the origin of this lethal tendency:

sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt
scelusque fraternae necis,
ut inmerentis fluxit in terram Remi
sacer nepotibus cruor (*Epod.* 7.17–20)

And so it is: bitter fates drive the Romans,
and the crime of fraternal slaughter,

as the blood of undeserving Remus flowed down to the earth,
a curse to his descendants.

The speaker suggests that the fratricide upon which Rome was founded set the tone for Rome's discordant future and acted as a curse or miasma of sorts; the Romans' seemingly compulsive drive to turn violence against themselves had been written into the national identity from the very beginning. As we shall see in the next chapter, Sallust also confronts the question of civil war's inevitability and raises the possibility that the "foundational sin" of Remus' murder is indelibly etched in the Roman character. Like *Epode 7*, *Epode 16* addresses triumviral discord quite directly, and also seems to be in conversation with Sallust and the *Histories*. Once again, Horace laments Rome's inability to extricate itself from an apparently endless cycle of civil war:

Altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas
suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit ...
impia perdemus devoti sanguinis aetas,
ferisque rursus occupabitur solum (*Epod.* 16.1–2, 9–10)

Yet another generation is being worn down by civil wars, and Rome is falling under her own strength ... we, a godless generation of accursed blood, will destroy it [Rome], and the earth will once again be occupied by beasts.

Unlike in *Epode 7*, Horace offers a solution here, although it is not practical (and probably not serious): the "better part" (*melior pars*) of the Romans should flee to the Blessed Isles, a mythological utopia where they will enjoy a new Golden Age far from their present discord (*Epod.* 16.41–66). As is discussed in [Chapter Four](#), the Blessed Isles seem to have been a useful *locus* to think with during the triumviral years; they also appear in the *Histories*, where Sallust describes them in the context of the rebel Sertorius' daydreams of escape.

Propertius may have been at work during the triumviral years, as well; his first book of elegies was probably published in 28.³³ As with Vergil's, Propertius' family seems to have lost property during the land confiscations.³⁴ Propertius' early work "betrays no sign that Rome and Italy have been rescued from the menace and the foreign queen, no word for the savior and hero,"³⁵ and is thus thematically closer to its triumviral counterparts than to Propertius' later books. This is most apparent in *Elegies* 1.21 and 22. Not only did Propertius suffer through the land confiscations, his hometown of Assisi was close to Perugia, which had been occupied by Lucius Antonius (brother of the triumvir) and Fulvia (Mark Antony's wife) and besieged by Octavian in 41/0 BCE. The final two poems of Propertius' first book lament the casualties

of the Perusine War, a conflict which highlighted both the hostility among the triumvirs and the tensions between Rome and Italy. In 1.21, Propertius gives voice to a dead soldier named Gallus, who has perished trying to escape from Perusia and whose corpse lies unburied; Gallus urges his brother-in-law, a wounded fellow soldier, to leave behind Gallus' "scattered bones" (*dispersa ... ossa*) and save himself. The *sphragis* of the *Cynthia*, 1.22, focuses on the poet's Italian (as opposed to Roman) identity and his identification with the area surrounding Perusia.

Si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulcra,
Italiae duris funera temporibus,
cum Romana suos egit Discordia civis,
(sic mihi praecipue, pulvis Etrusca, dolor
tu proiecta mei perpessa es membra propinqui,
tu nullo miseri contegis ossa solo),
proxima supposito contingens Umbria campo
me genuit terris fertilis uberibus. (Prop.1.22.3–10)³⁶

If the Perusine graves of our country are familiar to you, the grave of Italy during those difficult times when Roman discord drove its own citizens (so it was, Etruscan soil, that you were particularly sorrowful to me, you who allow the limbs of my kin to remain strewn about, you who cover their bones with no wretched earth) – nearby Umbria, which borders its [sc. Perusia's] low plain, fertile with abundant fields, produced me.

Once again, the pain of the civil wars is expressed less in terms of the practical or economic costs of dispossession and more in terms of personal and collective identity. It is telling that Propertius uses the *sphragis* poem to raise the issue of civil war, since this element of a collection is so closely connected with the poet's identity (or persona). Here, Propertius particularly highlights the tension between "Roman" and "Italian" identities and shows how civil war sets them in opposition to one another. *Discordia*, he suggests, is a Roman problem, and the Italians were unjustly suffering because of the Romans' inability to contain it.³⁷

Beyond poetry, many of Cornelius Nepos' biographies, published in the early 30s, are extant. Nepos attempted to bring moral clarity to his turbulent world by presenting great men of the past as *exempla*, sternly instructing his readers that "in general, each man's morals determine his fortune (*suos cuique mores plerumque conciliare fortunam*, Att. 19.1)." The *Life of Atticus* is an unusual work in that it was originally composed while its subject was still alive.³⁸ Atticus, well-known from his correspondence with Cicero, survived the Sullan civil war, the war between Caesar and Pompey, and the triumviral wars more or less unscathed, despite having the sort of wealth that attracts notice during periods of proscriptions and land confiscations. Nepos attributes Atticus' survival to his remarkable ability to remain neutral in times of violent

partisanship. He fled to Athens during the war between Sulla and Marius, putting geographical distance between himself (and his considerable wealth) and the conflict; later, he avoided openly taking sides in political conflict and willingly offered friendship and aid to those on both sides.³⁹ Nepos' case study of Atticus may seem more optimistic than the examples of triumviral literature we have surveyed insofar as it shows the *possibility* of emerging whole from civil war; Atticus' death surrounded by family in self-imposed exile is perhaps the happiest ending to be hoped for at any time, not just wartime. However, the *Life of Atticus* offered little practical hope for the average, non-aristocratic Roman or Italian who found himself swept up in the tides of history. The advice that "each man's morals determine fortune" was cold comfort to those who could not flee Italy or leverage their wealth or connections for safety. The *Atticus* is also, in its own way, just as defeatist as the other literature of this period. Its theme is individual survival alone, and there is no sense that Nepos has hope for the survival of the republic or Roman identity or that he sees a possible end to the civil wars. Like Nepos' triumviral contemporaries, the biographer seems to view peace as something no longer to be hoped for; the best we can ask is that we, ourselves, find a way to slip through the cracks.

The genre of history in the triumviral period remains elusive by comparison, and it is thus difficult to be certain about the extent to which the works of contemporary historians echoed the other writings of the time. Sallust's three works are our only extant examples of historiography firmly datable to the triumviral years. As the historical works of Asinius Pollio and others are lost but for a few fragments (far fewer than remain of the *Histories*), it is hard to say much about the character and themes of those histories. A case has been made for dating the earliest parts of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* to the very end of the triumviral period or the years immediately following Actium.⁴⁰ Despite the persistent assumption that Sallust and Livy represent a Latin version of the Herodotus/Thucydides antithesis (itself, of course, problematic), scholars like David Levene have persuasively demonstrated the inadequacy of this schema;⁴¹ Levene, Anthony Woodman, and others have also undercut the notion of Livy as "the complacent and uncritical Augustan patriot."⁴² Livy's career obviously continued well into the Augustan regime, and the question of how his view of Octavian/Augustus and the principate evolved is beyond the scope of the current project, but at least the preface and the first pentad show thematic affinities with triumviral literature. Broadly speaking, Sallust and Livy (at least as expressed in his preface) share a similarly bleak view of the present state of Rome compared with its more noble past.⁴³ If Livy began writing during the tense years before Actium, a bleak general outlook should not surprise us; this interpretation only requires mental contortions if we assume a securely "Augustan" date and mindset.⁴⁴

Livy's preface, in particular, seems to be in dialogue with other triumphal literature. His image of Rome turning its own strength against itself and bringing ruin upon its own people echoes Sallust's characterization of Rome as compulsively self-destructive (as will be discussed in more detail in [Chapter Two](#)). Livy describes Rome as "now laboring under its own size (*iam magnitudine laboret sua*)," and says that its strength has become self-defeating (*haec nova quibus ... vires se ipsae conficiunt*, *Praef.* 4). This description of Rome's self-destructive tendencies echoes not only Sallust but also the opening of Horace's *Epode* 16 (*Altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas/suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit*; passage discussed above). R.G.M. Nisbet suggested that both Livy and Horace used Sallust as a model here;⁴⁵ given the verbal parallels between Livy's and Sallust's prefaces⁴⁶ and Nisbet's evidence for Horace's engagement with Sallust elsewhere, this is plausible. At the very least, this formulation seems to have had resonance during the triumphal years. While "triumphal" themes are arguably more understated in the narrative than in the preface, the figure of Romulus has particular salience. Like many of Livy's Roman "heroes," his characterization is complex and often ambivalent.⁴⁷ What makes Livy's Romulus especially "triumphal" is his connection with Rome's history of civil war. Specifically, Livy's inclusion of the version of Remus' death in which Romulus knowingly commits fratricide implicitly links Rome's foundation with the idea of civil war; I will return to this idea in more detail in [Chapter Two](#). The limited evidence, then, seems that the themes present in the other genres discussed above may well also be found in histories written during the triumphal years. At least the early sections of Livy's history seem to reflect triumphal themes, although it remains difficult to say whether Pollio or the Tuberos, for example, expressed similar ideas.

Based on this brief overview, we can see that Osgood was right to identify a uniquely "triumphal" body of literature, and that this generically diverse corpus is unified not just by chronology but also by themes. Triumphal literature is exhausted and its resilience stripped away. It wonders aloud when the civil wars will end and peace restored to the republic, but it does not seem to expect an answer. The question is not so much *whether* civil discord is inevitable, but *why*? Triumphal literature, in its despair, confronts the possibility that *discordia* was written into the Roman character at the very start. Questions of identity also loom large in triumphal literature, a world in which "comrade" and "enemy" have become difficult to distinguish and in which Romans and Italians find themselves at odds once again, fifty years after the Social War. There is a queasy sense that everything has been turned on its head; triumphal literature describes a world where the coarse soldier possesses the gentle farmer's fields, where fellow citizens are now enemies, and where the *concordia* celebrated by the triumvirs still looks an awful lot like the

discordia of the past.

Sallust's literary career falls squarely during the triumviral years, and as we shall see, the *Histories*' "triumviral historiography" has strong thematic affinities with the other triumviral literature described here; the following chapters will explore his concern with the repetitive nature of Roman civil war and the threat posed by those wars to the idea of *Romanitas* and identity. Sallust's sense of the topsy-turviness of civil strife is expressed in terms clearly inherited from the original historian of *stasis*, Thucydides. He is preoccupied, even obsessed, with the disparity between words and deeds, and observes how the inversions of civil war provide cover for dissimulation. Under the triumvirs, language and meaning have become destabilized, as the ruling regime applies favorable labels to destructive actions; in this world, the relationship between words and deeds cannot be trusted, and the claims of those in power must be interrogated. This principle is at the heart of Sallust's approach to history, to which we turn next.

III Sallust's approach to history

My reading of the *Histories* is built on the premise that (in addition to being a compelling narrative of the time period in question) the entire work functioned as a large-scale meditation on the purpose and utility of writing history. It is beyond the scope of the present project to lay out a comprehensive, totalizing vision of Sallust's "philosophy of history." My focus is more narrowly historiographical; I am less concerned with Sallust's ideas about historical causes and trajectories than with his understanding of the occupation to which he devoted his post-politics years. Accordingly, in this section I will focus on Sallust's claims (or lack thereof) for the utility of writing history, particularly under the autocratic regime of the triumvirate. Sallust's most extensive commentary on historiographical issues comes, perhaps unsurprisingly, in his prefaces. I do not aim to be comprehensive in my treatment of these passages, for this has been done often and well by others;⁴⁸ however, as the main locus of Sallust's explicit meta-historical commentary they will be the focus of my discussion here. First, I give a brief overview of what we can observe about Latin historiographical prefaces before Sallust; next, I discuss Sallust's self-presentation as a historian in the proems of the monographs. I then turn to the *Histories*' preface and examine how its divergences from prior tradition and Sallust's earlier works suggest the ways in which the *Histories* represented historiographical innovation.

Ancient historians were self-reflective about the practice of writing history, and musings on the topic were frequently part of a work's preface.⁴⁹ Historical

prefaces vary in tone and content, but it seems to have been common for historians to use the proem to establish their authorial credibility and defend their belief that recording the deeds of the past, ancient or recent, was a worthwhile undertaking.⁵⁰ The works of the earliest Latin historians are fragmentary, but some general observations can be made about the Roman meta-historical preface prior to Sallust. One common element is the author's distinction between his own work and that of others, whether setting himself apart from the annalists or from less successful writers of history. For example, Coelius Antipater (c. 120s BCE) apparently used his preface to distinguish himself from his predecessors in veracity.⁵¹ Sempronius Asellio (c. 90s BCE) drew a distinction between himself and the annalists, tartly commenting that his work would illuminate causes and purposes rather than merely reporting the sequence of events.⁵² The early historians also seem to have frequently commented on the value of writing history (again, often in opposition to the use of annals). For example, Cato (c. 150s BCE) is said to have praised the value of history in the introduction to his *Origines* (although the original passage does not survive).⁵³ The fragments of Cato's preface also imply that he defended the use of his *otium* for writing history as a worthwhile pursuit.⁵⁴ Asellio, again positioning himself against the annalists, argued that true history serves to inspire readers; he thus claims a civic function for history-writing by suggesting that it leads others to act well in service of the state.⁵⁵ Thus, while the tradition remains somewhat unclear due to the state of the evidence, we can tentatively conclude that Latin historical prefaces often included a personal claim to authority within the tradition and a claim that writing history has some kind of public benefit.

Based on what we can deduce about earlier tradition, the prefaces of the monographs seem to be largely conventional insofar as they address the types of historiographical issues Sallust's audience would have come to expect. First and foremost, in both proems, Sallust defends the craft of history-writing as useful for the public good:

Pulchrum est bene facere rei publicae, etiam bene dicere haud absurdum est; vel pace vel bello clarum fieri licet. Et qui fecere et qui facta aliorum scripsere, multi laudantur

(*Cat.* 3.1)

It is a fine thing to act well on behalf of the republic; still, it is hardly useless to speak well on its behalf. It is possible to become distinguished in either peace or war. Many are praised – both those who have done things and those who have recorded the deeds of others.

Ceterum ex aliis negotiis quae ingenio exercentur, in primis magno usui est memoria rerum gestarum. Quoius de virtute quia multi dixere, praetereundum puto, simul ne per insolentiam quis existimet memet studium meum laudando extollere

But out of those pursuits which are conducted with the mind, the recording of things that have happened is of the greatest use. Concerning the value of this, because many have spoken about it, I think it can be passed over (also, in order that no one think that, out of pride, I am elevating my own interest by praising it).

Both prefaces make similar claims: writing history is a difficult yet important service, and those who perform it are worthy of merit. Sallust thus expands the traditional definition of *virtus* to include history-writing as a form of service to the state.⁵⁶ This is particularly salient, as Sallust notes later in the *Catiline*'s preface; because of their prejudice against those who are “passive” recorders of deeds rather than bold actors, the Romans had hitherto lacked the abundance of historical talent that glorified the deeds of the Athenians:

Atheniensium res gestae, sicut ego aestumo, satis amplae magnificaeque fuere, verum aliquanto minores tamen quam fama feruntur. Sed quia provenere ibi scriptorum magna ingenia, per terrarum orbem Atheniensium facta pro maxumis celebrantur. Ita eorum qui [ea] fecere virtus tanta habetur quantum eam verbis potuere extollere praeclara ingenia. At populo Romano numquam ea copia fuit, quia prudentissimus quisque maxume negotiosus erat; ingenium nemo sine corpore exercebat; optumus quisque facere quam dicere, sua ab aliis benefacta laudari quam ipse aliorum narrare malebat

(*Cat.* 8)

The affairs of the Athenians, as I see it, were great and splendid enough, but nevertheless somewhat lesser in reality than they are declared by their reputation. But because great talents of writers were produced there, the deeds of the Athenians are celebrated throughout the world as the very greatest. Thus, the virtue of those who acted is considered great to the extent that distinguished talents were able to exalt it. But the Roman people never had this benefit, because each most skilled man was also the most active; no one employed his intelligence separately from his body; the best men preferred to act rather than to speak and that their own good deeds be praised by others rather than to narrate others' deeds themselves.

In order for Rome to be assured of a lasting glory commensurate with its true greatness, it would need capable historians to record its deeds. By dignifying history-writing as a public service on par with political engagement, Sallust opens the door for others to follow the same path in the future without fear of scorn or accusations of indolence. In the *Jugurtha*, his tone shifts from modest and even defensive to embittered:

Verum ex eis magistratus et imperia, postremo omnis cura rerum publicarum minime mihi hac tempestate cupiunda videntur, quoniam neque virtuti honos datur, neque illi quibus per fraudem [ius] fuit [uti] tuti aut eo magis honesti sunt. Nam vi quidem regere patriam aut parentis, quamquam et possis et delicta corrigas, tamen importunum est, quom praesertim omnes rerum mutationes caedem, fugam, aliaque hostilia portendant. Frustra autem niti neque aliud se fatigando nisi odium quaerere, extremae dementiae est – nisi

forte quem inhonesta et perniciose libido tenet potentiae paucorum decus atque libertatem suam gratificari

(*Jug.* 3)

But among these things magistracies and commands, that is to say any oversight of public works, seem to me least desirable at this time, because honor is not bestowed upon virtue, nor are those who have acquired it through deceit safe or more honorable. For to rule the country or its subjects by force, even if you are able to correct abuses and actually do so, is nevertheless cruel, especially since all changes portend slaughter, exile, and other warlike things. Moreover, to struggle in vain and to find nothing but hatred after wearing oneself out, this is the height of madness, unless one is possessed, by chance, by a dishonorable and destructive passion to sacrifice one's own decency and freedom to the power of a few.

Sallust suggests that participation in politics has become disgraceful; those who are willing to work with the ruling regime are painted as foolish at best and, at worst, complicity in tyranny. Sallust thus further ennoble the occupation of the historian by implicit contrast; writing history is not only a useful service to the state, but now might also be even more honorable than traditional engagement in public life.

At the same time, by framing his argument as a positive affirmation of history's value and asserting that his new *otium* is as useful as the *negotium* of others, Sallust also artfully conceals any embarrassment about his estrangement from public life.⁵⁷ He suggests, although he does not claim outright, that his departure from politics was a voluntary one in response to the vice and weakness he observed in himself and others, and that he retired not because of scandal but because his unique insight to the corrupt nature of public life could be used constructively:

Igitur ubi animus ex multis miseriis atque periculis requievit et mihi relicuam aetatem a re publica procul habendam decrevi, non fuit consilium socordia atque desidia bonum otium contere, neque vero agrum colundo aut venando servilibus officiis intentum aetatem agere

(*Cat.* 4.1)

Therefore, when my soul had recovered from many misfortunes and dangers and I decided to spend the rest of my life far away from politics, it was not my plan to waste my valuable leisure in idleness and inactivity, nor to spend my life devoted to tilling a field or hunting, servile occupations.

Sallust thus spins his potential disgrace into a credential; his emphasis on the intentional nature of his "retirement" (*decrevi*) reinforces his role as a moral authority.⁵⁸ He also claims that his position of (ostensible) objectivity is a benefit to his historical work:

sed a quo incepto studioque me ambitio mala detinuerat, eodem regressus statui res gestas populi Romani carptim, ut quaeque memoria digna videbantur, perscribere; eo magis, quod

Instead, returning to an undertaking and passion from which wicked ambition had deterred me, I decided to write out the deeds of the Roman people in installments, as things seemed to me worthy of memory, even more eagerly because my mind was free from hope, fear, and political partisanship.

As the earlier Latin historians did, Sallust thus establishes his claim of personal authority and legitimizes himself as an ideal custodian of the Roman past.

However, despite Sallust's projected confidence in the value of his task and his own credibility, both monographs reflect anxiety about his new occupation. In the *Catiline*, he reflects upon the difficulty of matching words with deeds:

Ac mihi quidem, tametsi haudquaquam par gloria sequitur scriptorem et auctorem rerum, tamen in primis arduum videtur res gestas scribere: primum quod facta dictis exaequanda sunt, dehinc, quia plerique, quae delicta reprehenderis, malivolentia et invidia dicta putant; ubi de magna virtute atque gloria bonorum memores, quae sibi quisque facilia factu putat, aequo animo accipit, supra ea veluti ficta pro falsis ducit

(Cat. 3.2)

But indeed, although not at all equal glory follows the recorder and the performer of deeds, it nevertheless seems to me that writing history is extremely difficult; first, because the things that were done have to be equaled by the narration, and second, because many assume that the faults you criticize are mentioned out of malevolence or ill-will. But when you narrate the great virtue and glory of good men, everyone accepts agreeably only what he imagines he himself could do easily, and things beyond this he regards as incredible, as if they have been fabricated.

Here, Sallust raises two concerns. First, he points out the difficulty of matching action with narration. The challenge is not so much about veracity (do the historian's words accurately describe what happened?), but rather the more intangible quality of greatness: is it possible for words alone adequately to invoke the spirit of momentous actions? For the *scriptor* to earn glory equal to the *auctor*, he must somehow make this happen. By invoking the tension between words and deeds or representation and reality, Sallust also gestures to a theme that will be present in all three of his works and, as we shall see, is at the heart of the *Histories*. The second aspect of Sallust's concern here closely echoes a famous passage from his model Thucydides, Pericles' Funeral Oration.⁵⁹ It is difficult to be convincing to readers, he laments, because they will assume that anything that exceeds their expectations of good or bad has been exaggerated. There is more than a hint of contempt in this complaint, and Sallust continues to demonstrate disdain for his contemporary audience in the next monograph. In the *Jugurtha*, he again expresses concern for how his work will be received, but his focus has shifted:

Nam saepe ego audiui Q. Maxumum, P. Scipionem, <alios> praeterea civitatis nostrae praeclaros viros solitos ita dicere, quom maiorum imagines intuerentur, vehementissime sibi animum ad virtutem adcendi ... At contra quis est omnium, his moribus, quin divitiis et sumptibus, non probitate neque industria cum maioribus suis contendat?

(*Jug.* 4.5–7)

For I have often heard that Quintus Maximus, Publius Scipio, and other distinguished men of our state were accustomed to say that, when they gazed upon the *imagines* of their ancestors, their souls were passionately inspired to virtue ... But, by contrast, who is there at all in the current morality who does not vie with his ancestors in luxury and excess rather than in honesty and hard work?

Whereas Sempronius Asellio had claimed that writing history had the possibility of inspiring readers to energetic action on behalf of the state, Sallust expresses doubt that his contemporaries are capable of responding appropriately to examples from the past. He expects that his audience, rather than being inspired to imitate the great and beneficial deeds of history, will choose the wrong aspects to emulate. Thus, the writer of history faces multiple challenges: he must somehow represent great deeds with “mere” words, he must be convincing to readers who will believe he has exaggerated both good and bad in his account, and he cannot count on history’s traditionally exemplary mode to still be functional. Sallust’s belief in the civic value of historiography impelled him to write the monographs, but the prefaces suggest that he had never been unreservedly optimistic about the undertaking. After the monographs’ publication, he was not finished writing history, but the changing times demanded re-evaluation of Sallust’s task, and the doubts alluded to in the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* seem to have increased by the time Sallust started the *Histories*.

While the fragmentary state of the text precludes certainty, the preface of the *Histories* seems to have followed convention in some ways but to have departed from the monographs in important respects. As in the *Catiline*, Sallust makes a claim to objectivity, presumably as part of a claim to authority:

neque me divorsa pars in civilibus armis movit a vero (1.6 R/1.6 M)

nor did my opposition in civil war deter me from the truth

Sallust refers here to his role in Caesar’s army during the war against Pompey, who is one of the central figures of the *Histories*; that history, he assures us, does not influence his account.⁶⁰ Like the monographs, the *Histories* also contained an archaeology or digression on the history of Rome (1.8–16 R/1.7–18 M) which appears to have been quite similar to that of the *Catiline* (6–13).⁶¹

The points of departure are more telling than these (relatively superficial) similarities. The differences between the preface of the *Histories* and those of

the monographs largely relate to the way Sallust describes the craft of historiography. As T. S. Scanlon observed, breaking with tradition is a way of calling attention to a particular aspect of the work:

A reference to historiographical tradition and a truth claim in the preface can of course conform more or less to formulaic *topoi*, and the more closely these statements adhere to clichés, the less salient they are for the reader. Yet Sallust, by departing significantly from standard *topoi* in the preface to the *Historiae*, is calling attention to his craft as an historian. The reader is thereby led to review conventional historiography in order to evaluate the *Historiae* as a fresh form of *historia* required to convey what is, in the author's view, a new and urgent truth for its age.⁶²

Sallust signals to the reader that his historiographical program has evolved and raises our expectations for innovation by discussing the field of history-writing in a novel fashion in the *Histories'* preface. It is all still recognizably Sallustian, but the shifts in emphasis are perceptible, even in fragments. First, he seems to have replaced the more philosophical passages of the monographs (e.g., *Cat.* 1–2 and *Jug.* 1–2) with a more detailed discussion of his place in the historiographical tradition. As in the earlier works, there are general comments:

nos in tanta doctissimorum hominum copia

(1.5 R/1.3 M)

we, in such an abundance of most learned men

Since Sallust had commented on the paucity of Latin historians in the *Catiline*, we may reasonably assume that this statement places him in the Greco-Roman tradition more broadly. However, in a departure from the monographs, Sallust also discusses specific authors by name in the *Histories*:

Sallustius ... in libro primo Historiarum dat Catoni brevitatem – Romani generis disertissimus <multa> paucis absolvit – Fannio vero veritatem

(1.3 R/1.4 M)

Sallust ... in Book 1 of his *Histories* grants brevity to Cato – the most eloquent of the Roman people relates <many things> briefly – but truthfulness to Fannius.

The practice of discussing specific predecessors by name in the work's introduction appears to be unique to Sallust's *Histories*; while rivals or other sources are often referenced in the context of the narrative,⁶³ it does not seem to have been regular practice to discuss predecessors or competitors *nominatim* in the preface. As Scanlon has argued, the individuals singled out for comparison by Sallust have been carefully chosen to shape the reader's expectations.⁶⁴ As many critics have observed, Sallust's style (including his

brevitas) owes a great debt to Cato.⁶⁵ By praising Cato in the *Histories*' preface Sallust emphasizes that this resemblance is not accidental, and further suggests to the reader that we might look for other affinities with Cato in the narrative that follows. The second-century historian Fannius is mentioned for his *veritas*. We possess a scant few fragments of Fannius' work, too few to know for sure what aspect of his *veritas* Sallust might have been praising.⁶⁶ Still, one of the surviving passages may give us some sense of what Sallust found appealing:

cum in vita agenda didicimus multa, quae inpraesentiarum bona videntur, <turpia> post inuenta et multa amplius alius modi atque ante uisa essent

(*FRHist* 12 F1/Peter Fr. 1)

when in living our lives we have learned that many things which seem good at the time are later discovered to be shameful, and furthermore that many things are different than they previously seemed

For Sallust, this is more than just a bit of folk wisdom about the realizations that come with experience. Fannius articulates one of the central tenets of the *Histories*: the disparity between representation and reality. We will return to this point about Fannius below.

The *Histories*' prologue diverges from the monographs in another important aspect: it contains no explicit justification of historiography. Scholars have struggled to explain this apparent absence. It is, of course, possible that the *Histories* did contain such a statement, but it does not survive to us. However, this seems improbable. Programmatic statements were of interest to ancient commentators and excerpters; it seems likely that a proclamation of history's utility would have been preserved in some fashion. It is also worth noting that the preface of Tacitus' *Histories*, which echoes Sallust in other respects, also lacks such a statement.⁶⁷ Another possibility is that Sallust was satisfied that he had explained and defended history's utility in the monographs. This explanation is plausible but unsatisfactory. The *Histories* were Sallust's first foray into large-scale annalistic history; even if he felt he had explained himself sufficiently in the monographs, his first venture in a new genre surely called for a re-assertion of his historiographical philosophy, even if it had remained consistent.

Another possibility is that Sallust's conception of history's utility had *not*, in fact, remained consistent, and that his evolving view on the subject required an evolution in his presentation of it, as well. The prefaces of the monographs had left open the question whether, in such degraded times, history could accomplish what the author hoped; the absence of even a tentative claim for history's utility in the *Histories* might indicate Sallust's descent into a deeper

pessimism yet. As was discussed in the previous section, Rome's political situation had grown more dismal during the five or so years since the publication of the *Catiline*. The triumvirate had consolidated its authority; dissent was increasingly ineffectual as the triumvirs refined their aggressive program of public messaging and crowded out (or shouted over) competing narratives. Sallust had been pessimistic about his contemporaries' ability to benefit from study of the past back when he was writing the *Jugurtha*, as we saw above, and he certainly had no more reason for optimism when he was writing the *Histories*. Furthermore, the very stability of language itself – the one tool of the historian, the means by which he must match the great deeds he narrates – was thrown into disruption in the chaos of civil war. Sallust *did* address this explicitly in the *Histories*' preface:

Postquam remoto metu Punico simultates exercere vacuum fuit, plurimae turbae, seditiones et ad postremum bella civilia orta sunt, dum pauci potentes, quorum in gratiam plerique concesserant, sub honesto patrum aut plebis nomine dominationes adfectabant, bonique et mali cives adpellati non ob merita in rem publicam – omnibus pariter corruptis – sed uti quisque locupletissimus et iniuria validior, quia praesentia defendebat, pro bono ducebatur

(1.12 R/1.12 M)

Later, when the Punic threat was removed, there was an opening for them to cultivate disputes, and many riots, civil disturbances, and, at last, civil wars arose, while the powerful few, under whose influence most had fallen, were aiming for tyrannies under the good name of the senate or the plebs, and citizens were called “good” or “bad” not according to their worthiness of the republic, since everyone was equally corrupt; but as each man was most wealthy and could inflict the greatest harm, he was considered good, because he was protecting the status quo.⁶⁸

Here Sallust echoes the famous Corcyrean excursus of Thucydides, in which the Greek historian made a similar claim about the effects of *stasis* on language; we will return to these passages shortly.⁶⁹ This, perhaps, is the “truth” Sallust appreciated in Fannius: that things are not what they seem, but we often realize this too late. It is not clear in what context Fannius made this statement, but Sallust's understanding of it will resound throughout the *Histories*; the villains of his narrative, both explicit and implicit, are those who weaponize the rift between representation and reality. Sallust improves upon Fannius, for whom clear-sightedness emerges only in retrospect, by recognizing this rift in “real time”; this, as I shall argue in the next chapter, is one of the principal lessons he aims to impart on the *Histories*' audience.

Even if his understanding of its utility had changed since the monographs, did Sallust still believe that writing history had a purpose? The answer is surely yes, for he devoted the final years of his life to composing the *Histories*.⁷⁰ Perhaps writing history was still a noble undertaking on behalf of

the state, but simply stating this, as in the monographs, may have seemed facile and ineffectual under the present circumstances. Perhaps Sallust would not make a bold statement about historiography's value in the preface of the *Histories* not because he had given up on the utility of history, but because the times demanded a new way of writing history; there was no need for a pithy reflection in the *Histories'* preface. The absence of such a reflection leaves multiple possibilities open, and Sallust may indeed have had multiple reasons. In the chapters that follow, I will suggest that the entire work functioned as an extended, implicit meditation on the continuation of history under the triumvirate. As we shall see in the next chapter, Sallust's new history would be allusive and analogical. This is one key to the absence of a defense of historiography from the *Histories'* prologue: plainly articulating the work's aim would undermine the entire project. If, as I shall argue, Sallust aimed to guide readers to recognize the gulf between words and deeds (in the present, and not just retrospectively like Fannius) by "training" them with historical analogies, it would seem counterproductive to open the work by announcing this. Such an explicit declaration would run counter to the spirit and purpose of analogical historiography. In a world where language and meaning themselves seemed to be up for grabs and where the exemplary value of the past had been compromised, openly didactic history would be useless. To use a modern expression, Sallust's novel and ambitious project would "show, not tell"; rather than offering explicit instruction in how to read history under an autocratic regime, his work would provide models of writing (or "writing") and interpreting history as well as opportunities to practice reading on multiple levels. While the narrative had much to offer even the superficial reader, deeper messages were there to be discovered by readers who were willing and able to peel back the interpretive layers for themselves.

Notes

- 1 I have used Ramsey's text of Sallust – his 2013 revision of Rolfe's *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* and his 2015 edition of the *Histories* – throughout this book. For the reader's convenience I provide both Ramsey and Maurenbrecher's *Histories* fragment numbers.
- 2 Having spent considerable time with the work, I must respectfully disagree with Syme's assertion that "even if Sallust's mature and major work, the *Historiae*, had survived, there is no reason to suppose that it came anywhere near [Thucydides'] *History of the Peloponnesian War* for diligence, integrity, and depth" (1964: 1).
- 3 "Le *Historiae* di Sallustio e un'interpretazione della crisi repubblicana," (1963) and a large section of *Sallustio e la "rivoluzione" romana* (1968), minimally revised from the 1963 article.
- 4 Cf. Ernst Badian's review of La Penna 1968: 106–107.
- 5 For example, Arusianus Messius is the primary source for 106 fragments, 103 of which are transmitted with book number; 58 of the 61 fragments from Nonius are transmitted with

- book number. See McGushin 1992: 7–10 for a more detailed discussion of the contributions of the individual grammarians.
- 6 The best evidence for the *Histories*' annalistic structure is the Fleury palimpsest, deciphered by Heuler in 1886. For more detailed discussion of this manuscript, see Bloch 1961; for an overview of its importance, see Ramsey 2015: xv–xiii.
 - 7 The one noteworthy revision adopted by most modern editions, first suggested by La Penna 1963 and Perl 1975's work on the *Histories*' structure, is the division of events into a more overtly Thucydidean annalistic structure with spring/summer and fall/winter campaign seasons, with books terminating mid-year.
 - 8 Bennett 1970: x.
 - 9 Asconius' commentary on Cicero's *Pro Milone* is especially informative. Syme 1964: 29–42 gives a complete overview of Sallust's career and the ancient sources for it.
 - 10 Sisenna's *Histories* ended with the death of Sulla, and Asinius Pollio's history probably began around 60 BCE.
 - 11 Which, unfortunately, also do not survive, although I will make some use of the *periochae* of relevant books here.
 - 12 Unfortunately, much of Dio 30–35 is also fragmentary.
 - 13 On Plutarch's use of the *Histories* generally, see Peter 1865. In addition, numerous articles and commentaries discuss Plutarch's use of Sallust as a source for particular *Lives*. For discussion and more extensive bibliography on specific *Lives*, see Konrad 1994 on the *Sertorius*, Tröster 2008 on the *Lucullus*, and Heftner 1995 on the *Pompey*.
 - 14 Gumbrecht 1997: 327.
 - 15 There is a risk of allowing the pendulum to swing too far in the direction of overly aggressive reconstruction; cf. Brunt's caution: "[I]n my judgment, the most learned and acute scholars have often been over-confident in delineating the scope of lost histories and the qualities of their authors" (Brunt 1980: 494).
 - 16 Syme 1964: 179.
 - 17 E.g., Perkins 1992: 65: "At present, we tend to regard periods as necessary fictions. They are necessary because ... one cannot write history or literary history without periodizing. Moreover, we require the concept of a unified period in order to deny it, and thus make apparent the particularity, local difference, heterogeneity, fluctuation, discontinuity, and strife that are now our preferred categories for understanding any moment of the past."
 - 18 Sometimes to an astonishingly granular degree; for example, Cicero's letters from 44 until his death provide "a sometimes day-by-day resumé of the writer's activities" (Osgood 2006: 25).
 - 19 Some scholars have offered alternatives to this traditional division. For example, Harriet Flower's *Roman Republics* (2010) challenged the traditional demarcation of "Early," "Middle," and "Late Republic" and offered in its place an "articulated" chronology of the republic. One of Flower's main concerns was the recognition of transitional periods, and she identifies two triumviral periods (59–53 and 43–33) as distinct entities.
 - 20 *Cambridge Ancient History* 9 (1994) and 10 (1996).
 - 21 Handbooks like the *Cambridge Ancient History* give perfectly serviceable accounts of this period; as was mentioned above, the triumviral period may be found in *CAH* Volume 10. In my opinion, Syme 1939 is peerless for pure enjoyment of reading. For reasons that are surely obvious given my approach to Sallust, I am also partial to Syme's account as its own example of analogical historiography, in which Syme's view of Roman history is filtered through the lens of the rising totalitarianism of the 1930s. Osgood 2006 provides a different

- sort of account, explicitly grounded in a diverse body of primary sources both literary and material, but one that is equally insightful and nearly as much fun to read.
- 22 As was noted in the Introduction (n.3), precise dates of each of Sallust's works remain elusive. Maurenbrecher, following Linker, posits 39 BCE as the *terminus post quem* for the *Histories*' inception; McGushin 1992: 4 demurs ("None of the theories on dating is compelling; precise dating remains unattainable.").
 - 23 For a full accounting of Sallust's political career, see Syme 1964: 29–42 and Ramsey's updated Introduction to Rolfe's Loeb edition (2013: xix–xxvii).
 - 24 Plut. *Ant.* 32 and App. *BCiv.* 5.73.
 - 25 Syme 1978: 169: "Something might be said in favor of a new and novel period, from the institution of the triumvirate in 43 BC to the return of normal government in 28 BC." Cf. Syme 1964: 274–275.
 - 26 Syme 1978: 169.
 - 27 For example, Conte 1994 avoids directly addressing the triumviral period by moving from "The Late Republic" to "The Age of Augustus"; he includes Sallust in the former section but Vergil and Horace in the later, despite their activity contemporary with Sallust. Von Albrecht 1997 follows the same structure, moving from a chapter on "Literature of the Republican Period" to "Literature of the Augustan Period," which has the awkward effect of associating Sallust's works more closely with Livius Andronicus and the comedic playwrights than with, say, Livy. Conte and von Albrecht most certainly did not *actually* conceive of "The Republic" as a unified whole, and both were constrained for practical purposes by the handbook format; however, because of its convenience, this broad categorization has strongly shaped the way in which we approach Latin literature.
 - 28 E.g., Farrell 2005: especially 44–45; Osgood 2006: 4.
 - 29 Osgood 2006: 5.
 - 30 Cf. *Ecl.* 9.2–6: *O Lycida, vivi pervenimus, advena nostri/(quod numquam veriti sumus) ut possessor agelli/diceret: 'haec mea sunt; veteres migrate coloni.'/nunc victi, tristes, quoniam Fors omnia versat/hos illi (quod nec vertat bene) mittimus haedos* ("O Lycidas, in our lifetime we have reached the point – something we never feared – that a stranger, occupier of our little farm, could say: 'These things are mine; depart, old tenants!' Now, defeated, sad, since Fate turns over everything, we send him these kids – may it not turn out well for him!").
 - 31 Volk 2008: 4–5 gives an overview of the "ideological" debate over the *Georgics* (optimistic/Augustan vs pessimistic/ambivalent readings).
 - 32 E.g., G. 2.505–512.
 - 33 Lyne 1998: 520–521 summarizes arguments for the dating of Book 1.
 - 34 *ossaque legisti non illa aetate legenda/patris et in tenuis cogeris ipse lares:/nam tua cum multi versarent rura iuveni/abstulit exultas pertica tristis opes* ("You collected the bones of your father, which should not have been collected at that age, and you yourself were forced to a mean home; for, although many oxen used to plow your fields, the bitter measuring-rod took away your well-tilled works" 4.1.127–34).
 - 35 Syme 1964: 275.
 - 36 Text is that of Heyworth's OCT (2007).
 - 37 Syme 1939: 208; Osgood 2006: 164–165.
 - 38 An addendum comprising sections 19–22 was composed after Atticus' death.
 - 39 E.g., *Att.* 8.6, 9.4, 11.1–2, 12.3–4.

- 40 Luce 1965 was the first to challenge in some detail the conventional view, which held that the first pentad must have been started no earlier than the mid-20s. Luce concluded that at least the first pentad was probably completed before 27 BCE, and that internal evidence suggesting a later date (e.g., Livy's remarks on the closing of the gates of Janus) could plausibly be shown to be later insertions. Woodman 1988; Burton 2000, reiterating and building upon Luce's argument, posit a pre-Actian date for the beginning of Livy's composition.
- 41 An assumption no doubt originating with Quintilian's comparison of the authors (10.1.101); see Levene 2007: 277–286.
- 42 Levene 2007: 276.
- 43 Levene 2007: 284.
- 44 For example, accepting a triumviral date relieves us of the mental gymnastics required to justify why an “Augustan” writer would find fault with the present circumstances (e.g., the argument that Livy's reference to “our ills (*vitia nostra*)” and their intolerable “cures (*remedia*)” must be connected with Augustus' failed morality legislation of 28 BCE, which may or may not have actually existed); see Woodman 1988: 132–133, with bibliography.
- 45 Nisbet 1984: 5; see also Woodman 1988: 131–132.
- 46 Woodman 1988: 130–131.
- 47 Levene 2007: 285.
- 48 Badian was unduly harsh in referring to the literature on the prefaces as a “stagnant pool” of “adulatory exegesis totally remote from reality” (1971: 103). However, it is true that the proems are the most studied elements of Sallust's works, and their analysis has dominated modern Sallustian scholarship. The prefaces of the monographs, in particular, have been discussed at length from many perspectives. See, among many, Büchner 1982: 93–113; Earl 1961: 5–17; La Penna 1968: 25–32; Koestermann 1971: 23–42; Tiffou 1974; Vretska 1976: 23–29 and commentary *ad loc.*, McGushin 1977: 29–57; Kraus and Woodman 1997: 13–16; Balmaceda and Comber 2009: 188–193. Most discussions of the *Histories*' preface have focused on Sallust's moral and political philosophy and how his thinking had evolved since the monographs; see Scanlon 1998: 187 n.2 for bibliography. Tiffou's discussion of Sallust's increasing pessimism in response to the increasingly desperate political situation is particularly relevant here.
- 49 Cf. Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 52–54, who identifies this *topos* as an effective way for historians to gain the reader's attention.
- 50 For a comprehensive overview of the tradition, see Marincola 1997.
- 51 *ex scriptis eorum qui veri arbitrantur*, “from the writings of those who truly think” (L. Coelius Antipater, FRHist 15 F62/Peter Fr. 2). Cicero, who presumably had access to the complete text, interpreted Coelius' remarks as criticism of his predecessors' accuracy: *Fanii autem aetati coniunctus Coelius Antipater paulo inflavit vehementius, habuitque vires agrestis ille quidem atque horridas, sine nitore ac palaestra, sed tamen admonere reliquos potuit ut adcuratius scriberent*, “But Coelius Antipater, contemporary with Fannius, breathed a little more forcefully, and he had a strength that was rustic and unpolished, without gloss or robustness, but nevertheless he had the authority to advise those who came later to write more carefully,” Leg. 1.2.6. Cf. Scanlon 1998: 190–191.
- 52 *Scribere autem bellum initum quo consule et quo confectum sit, et quis triumphans introierit ex eo, quae<que> in bello gesta sint non praedicare aut interea quid senatus decreuerit aut quae lex rogatione lata sit, neque quibus consiliis ea gesta sint iterare, id fabulas pueris est*

narrare, non historias scribere, “Indeed, to write in whose consulship a war began and in whose it ended, at who enter the city in triumph because of it, but not to say what happened in the war or, what the senate decreed in the meantime or what law or proposal was put forward, nor to describe with what intention these things were done – that is to tell stories to children, not to write histories” (Sempronius Asellio, *FRHist* 20 F2/Peter Fr. 2). Cato was similarly critical of the annalists, although his remarks have been ascribed to Book 4 of the *Origines* rather than the preface (*FRHist* 5 F80/Peter Fr. 77).

- 53 *principiorum ad historiam pertinentium species sunt tres: de historia, de persona, de materia. Aut enim historiae bonum generaliter commendamus, ut Cato ...* “There are three types of prefaces which are relevant to writing history: concerning history, concerning the author, and concerning the subject matter. For either we commend the general value of history, as Cato does ...” (*Excerpt. rhet. Paris.* pp. 588–9; Cato, *FRHist* 5 T9/Peter Fr. 3).
- 54 *Etenim M. Catonis illud, quod in principio scripsit originum suarum, semper magnificum et praeclarum putavi, clarorum virorum atque magnorum non minus otii quam negotii rationem exstare oportere*, “For I have always considered magnificent and grand the saying of Marcus Cato, which he wrote in the preface of his *Origines*, that it is fitting that an account be given of the leisure of distinguished and great men, no less than of their business” (Cic. *Planc.* 66/Cato *Origines*, *FRHist* 5 F2/Peter Fr. 2). Cf. commentary by Cornell 2013: 63.
- 55 *Nam neque alacriores ad rempublicam defendendam neque segniores ad rem perperam faciendam annales libri commouere quicquam possunt*, “For books of annals are not at all able to make anyone more eager to defend the republic or more hesitant to act wrongly” (Sempronius Asellio, *FRHist* 20 F2/Peter Fr. 2).
- 56 Earl 1961: 28–40; Tiffou 1974: 119–154; Balmaceda 2017: 52–53.
- 57 Cf. *Jug.* 4.4 (*profecto existumabunt ... maiusque commodum ex otio meo quam ex aliorum negotiis rei publicae venturum*, “They will surely think that ... greater benefit will come to the republic from my ‘leisure’ than from the work of others”).
- 58 Cf. *Jug.* 4.3 (*Atque ego credo fore qui, quia decrevi procul a re publica aetatem agere*, “But I suppose, since I have decided to spend my life far away from politics, there will be those who ...”).
- 59 χαλεπὸν γὰρ τὸ μετρίως εἰπεῖν ἐν ᾧ μόλις καὶ ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας βεβαιοῦται. ὃ τε γὰρ ξυνειδῶς καὶ εὖνους ἀκροατῆς τάχ’ ἂν τι ἐνδεστέρως πρὸς ἃ βούλεται τε καὶ ἐπίσταται νομίσειε δηλοῦσθαι, ὃ τε ἄπειρος ἔστιν ἃ καὶ πλεονάζεσθαι, διὰ φθόνον, εἴ τι ὑπὲρ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἀκούει. μέχρι γὰρ τοῦδε ἀνεκτοὶ οἱ ἔπαινοί εἰσι περὶ ἐτέρων λεγόμενοι, ἐς ὅσον ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος οἴηται ἱκανὸς εἶναι δρᾶσαι τι ὧν ἤκουσεν: τῷ δὲ ὑπὲρ βάλλοντι αὐτῶν φθονοῦντες ἤδη καὶ ἀπιστοῦσιν, “It is difficult to speak properly on a topic where even the idea of the ‘truth’ is hardly reliable. For the listener who is familiar with it and well-disposed might think that it has been expressed somewhat insufficiently compared to what he knows and would prefer, and if the listener who is not familiar hears something beyond his own ability, because of his envy he assumes that it has been exaggerated. For praises spoken about others are endurable only to the point that each person thinks he himself is capable of doing the things he has heard about; being envious, they disbelieve anyone surpassing these things,” 2.35.2.
- 60 This reading is supported by fragment 1.7 R/1.10 M, from a scholiast at Lucan 3.164, which suggests that Sallust may have said something more detailed about the civil war of 49–48: *QUOD CATO: ... meminit huius Sallustius in principio libri primi Historiae* (“Which Cato ... Sallust mentions this Cato in the preface to the first book of his *Histories*”).
- 61 As is appropriate to its topic, the *Jugurtha* contains a short excursus on Numidian history

62 Scanlon 1998: 188.

63 E.g., Sallust's mention of Sisenna at *Jug.* 95.

64 Scanlon 1998: 201–205.

65 See Chapter Two for more detailed discussion of Sallust's prose style.

66 Scanlon 1998: 203–204 follows Badian 1966: 14 in identifying this C. Fannius as the consul of 122 and crediting him as the origin of the optimate anti-Gracchan tradition. The consul Fannius was aided by Tiberius Gracchus early in his career and turned against him later. Scanlon thus assumes that Sallust's appreciation for Fannius was due to "the ability to describe a turbulent period of history without adherence to partisan sentiment" (203). This is an appealing conclusion, but I agree with Cornell 2013 that the problematic identification (even Cicero was not sure whether the historian Fannius was the same as consul; cf. *Brut.* 99–101 and *Att.* 12.5b) and obscurity of his actual work preclude certainty here.

67 Scanlon 1998: 197.

68 Cf. *Cat.* 38.2, 52.11.

69 καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιοῦσει. τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθῆς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνετὸν ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀργόν, "And they transformed the traditional value of words in accordance with what seemed justified. For reckless audacity was considered courage on behalf of comrades, prudent forethought was considered specious cowardice, moderation a veil for spinelessness, and capacity to understand everything was considered laziness about everything" (Thucy. 3.82.4). See Chapter Two for further discussion.

70 Cf. Tiffou 1974: 320–321.

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2 Analogical historiography

The *Histories* narrate the years following Sulla's death, but Sallust always writes with an eye on contemporary affairs; the moral decay and political turmoil of the triumviral period are never far in the background. In this chapter, I outline Sallust's method of "analogical historiography," through which Sallust presents his critique of contemporary politics and society via his portrayal of the past. First, I discuss Sallust's use of historical allusion, focusing on two case studies from the *Histories* as examples. In the second and third parts of this chapter, I discuss the possible reasoning behind and effects of Sallust's analogical mode of historiography. Allusion is a ubiquitous part of Roman literary discourse, but I suggest that Sallust is especially drawn to this method for two main reasons. First, historical allusion asks the reader to engage with the text on multiple levels, and to parse past from present; it thus encourages the sort of critical interrogation required for life under a regime that views the "truth" as flexible and subordinate to its interest in shaping its own image. Second, as a form of literary repetition, allusion allows Sallust to confront the repetitive nature of civil war and, possibly, to address the individual and collective trauma left in its wake.

I Analogical historiography

Dissidere inter se coepere, neque in medium consultare.

(4.27 R/4.37 M)

They began to be divided among themselves and did not deliberate together.¹

The uprising led by the runaway slave Spartacus (73–71 BCE) was one of the central events of the *Histories*, appearing in Books Three and Four; it seems to have been treated in lavish detail, with Spartacus himself possibly the subject of a character sketch (3.38–39 R).² Maurenbrecher assigned this fragment to the final stage of the Spartacus War based on reference to a quarrel between the

leaders of the revolt in the parallel passage in Plutarch's *Life of Crassus*. Although Maurenbrecher proposed that this fragment described a disagreement between Spartacus, Gaius Gannicus, and Castus, the reader could be forgiven for assuming that it described a quarrel among Roman politicians. In fact, no less a reader than Syme conjectured that the passage in fact refers to conflict between Pompey and Crassus during their joint consulship in 70 BCE.³ This is not an unreasonable inference. As will be discussed below, Sallust's language here is borrowed from the Roman deliberative sphere; Sallust and his contemporaries tended to reserve verbs like *dissidere* and *consultare* for depictions of Roman citizens, not "barbarians" like the runaway slaves. However, despite Syme's reservations, Maurenbrecher's assignment of the fragment to Spartacus seems sound, and subsequent editors have adopted it.⁴ If we too accept Maurenbrecher's reasoning, we are left with a perplexing passage. Describing runaway gladiators with the language of Roman public life confuses the boundaries of Roman and non-Roman; this, in turn, encourages us to read the dispute between the rebel slaves as a type of "civil war." Sallust thus reminds his contemporaries of their own discordant world, as the anachronistic invocation of civil war jerks the readers' attention out of the narrative world and into their own. In essence, Sallust, through his word choice, creates a civil war where there was not one. He thus mirrors (in negative) the triumvirs' attempts to disguise their civil wars as other types of conflicts and demonstrates the ease with which labels can be manipulated to represent – or misrepresent – reality.

This fragment's easy movement between narrative time and compositional time is characteristic of the *Histories*. This is the premise of analogical historiography, the method by which Sallust introduces contemporary figures and issues to his narrative of the 70s. In the *Histories*, civil war appears in unexpected or anachronistic contexts, and characters in the narrative act conspicuously like major players from the triumviral period.

Before exploring an allusive reading of the *Histories*, I want to emphasize that I do *not* argue that Sallust cared nothing about the events of the 70s and 60s and that they are exclusively the vehicle for his contemporary critique. I do not mean to reduce Sallust to the status of a political pamphleteer, nor do I mean to imply that the narrative of the *Histories* is mere pretext. The analogical reading need not preclude the more direct one; Sallust may well have been interested in both the "truth" about the 70s for its own sake and the insight it provided into Rome's current situation.⁵ There is no reason to think that, just because he was writing a history, Sallust was not writing works with multiple interpretive possibilities, as scholars have long credited the Roman poets with doing. Since the late twentieth century, the study of ancient historiography has increasingly embraced the language and theory of literary

interpretation.⁶ This is a welcome, if belated, development. The ancient historians themselves did not see their task as the simple and objective transmission of facts (that was the job of annals and *commentarii*).⁷ Just like tragedians and epic poets and orators, they were schooled in rhetoric and steeped in literary tradition; there is no reason to think that historians did not use literary tools with the same care and creativity as other writers.⁸ Critics since at least Servius' day have allowed that the *Aeneid* could be both about something and *about* something;⁹ likewise, nothing precludes the possibility that Sallust's *Histories* cannot be both a very fine history of the post-Sullan generation and also a critique of Sallust's triumviral context.

Nevertheless, reading the *Histories* through the lens of historical allusion presents methodological challenges. In the first place, we must determine what exactly constitutes an historical allusion. If an event in the text evokes the memory of another historical event, it may simply be a case of two similar events – something just happened to happen in a similar way twice. Ancient authors were often keen to identify parallels between events, themes, and figures they saw as a return to (or from) the past,¹⁰ and so it is difficult (sometimes even impossible) for us to know the extent to which these elements were actually similar and the extent to which our authors amplified the parallels for their own purposes. It can also be challenging to distinguish between historical allusions (allusions to specific historical events) and intertextual references (allusions to prior accounts of historical events) or the repetition of historiographical tropes.¹¹ In the case of Sallust's *Histories*, which were composed about forty years after the events described, this is not a significant concern. There does not seem to have been a formal "history" of the 70s and 60s to which Sallust might have alluded. However, Sallust may have referenced political pamphlets, treatises, speeches, and other documents now unavailable to us.

Further complicating the issue is the fact that a single figure or episode often has multiple literary or historical intertextual references. Accordingly, we must resist the temptation to search for simple equivalencies in the *Histories* and to turn our reading into an allegorical matching game in which (for example) Pompey always "equals" Octavian and so always must be read through an Octavianic lens. Sallust does not present to us isolated moments or figures that echo other eras, but rather a vast network of complex allusions. These allusions are not simple or consistent analogies (e.g., Pompey always "is" Octavian), but rather in many cases evoke multiple (and sometimes even conflicting) referents. In the case of the *Aeneid*, Jasper Griffin pointed out that the search for precise and fixed referents is a needlessly constraining application of typology. The poem's characters are complex and multi-layered, and their various literary and historical resonances need not be seen as mutually

exclusive to be intelligible. Dido can “be” Cleopatra, but also Nausicaa, and Calypso, and even Medea.¹² Cynthia Damon has demonstrated that intertexts and allusions in historiography can be just as indeterminate as those in poetry. Again, we should not be surprised to see historians using literary tools with the same nuance and sophistication as their poetic counterparts.

Thus, in the case of an isolated example or passage, it might not be possible or even desirable to determine the “true” reference being made. A single figure or event might evoke a multiplicity of antecedents, both textual and historical, direct or mediated.¹³ As Damon cautions, “the very frequency of historical intertexts may mute the significance of any individual evocation.”¹⁴ However, read collectively, the aggregation of examples of historical allusion across the *Histories* is difficult to ignore,¹⁵ and common themes and techniques within the multiplicity can be identified.

Finding the 30s in the 70s: examples

Sallust uses two different types of allusion in the *Histories*. In the first type, Sallust exploits and exaggerates natural similarities between narrative time and compositional time to draw parallels between the two time periods. In the second type, Sallust does the opposite and creates parallels where none should exist to exaggerate the similarities of the two eras. In particular, he “invents” civil war where it does not exist; this emphasizes both the persistently repetitive nature of civil strife and the pernicious mutability of categories and labels in the context of civil war.

The revolt of Lepidus in Book One offered Sallust numerous historical parallels on which to build; the situation had similarities to contemporary events in both actions and rhetoric, and familial connections between significant figures in Lepidus’ revolt and Sallust’s day added to the reader’s perception of temporal slippage. After Sulla’s death, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (consul of 78) positioned himself as the champion of the *populares*, arguing for grain distributions and the restoration of tribunician powers; his efforts were hindered by his consular colleague, Quintus Lutatius Catulus. In 78, Lepidus encouraged an uprising of landowners in Etruria displaced by Sulla’s land confiscations. Both consuls had been sent to quell the disturbance, but the conflict between the consuls was inflamed when Lepidus cast in his lot with the rebels and spurred on the revolt rather than restoring order. In 77, Lepidus took up his proconsular province of Transalpine Gaul; using that province as his base and relying on the support he had built up in Etruria, he attempted to march on Rome.

Lucius Marcius Philippus, a Sullan partisan and one of the senior senators to have survived the Sullan wars, seems to have positioned himself as a leader of

the senatorial opposition to Lepidus. In the *Histories*, Sallust seems to have used Philippus as the voice of the establishment and gives him one of the work's four extant speeches. Although Lepidus' march is not described in the extant fragments, Philippus alludes to it as he argues for a *senatus consultum ultimum* against Lepidus on the grounds that he is attempting to stir up a civil war:

An expectatis dum exercitu rursus admoto ferro atque flamma urbem invadat?

(1.67.10 R/1.77.10 M)

Or are you waiting until he once again raises an army and invades the city with sword and fire?

Philippus appears to allude here to a previous threat by Lepidus to march on the city (although it is unclear how concrete that threat was).¹⁶ Lepidus seems to have followed through on this threat later on.¹⁷ This line of Philippus' speech may have had numerous echoes for Sallust's contemporary readers, evoking multiple events in living memory (and some very recent indeed). Sulla's marches on Rome seem to have had a normalizing effect. What was previously an unspeakable act of treason now became a potentially useful tool; marching on the city was still a grave act but no longer an unthinkable one. Thus, it was a credible threat when Pompey threatened to bring his Spanish army over the Alps if he did not receive the aid he requested (2.86.10 R); after Sulla's marches (the second of which Pompey himself joined), this could not be assumed to be a bluff. In 49 BCE Caesar, of course, had famously brought his army past the Rubicon and into the deserted capital. More recently, his adopted son and heir followed suit with a march of his own in 43, in a successful attempt to demand the consulship after the deaths of Hirtius and Pansa.¹⁸ Philippus' use of the adverb *rursus* seems to refer to Lepidus' multiple attempts to organize his march, but also has the effect of underscoring the persistent return of civil war to Rome.

It takes no great stretch of the imagination to see the echoes between Lepidus' revolt and later events;¹⁹ Sallust had a great deal to work with here and took advantage of the similarities.²⁰ There were general and inescapable parallels in the way events unfolded. In particular, Sallust draws out the parallels between Lepidus' revolt and the Perusine War; Perusia's location in Etruria, Lepidus' support base, makes the analogy particularly appealing. Both were citizen uprisings in which suffering Italians felt compelled to choose between surrendering to the status quo or casting their lots with leaders who made all the right promises (*libertas* and so forth) in hopes of something better; in both cases, those promises came up empty.²¹ On both occasions, the leaders of each party were eager to claim the moral high ground and deflect

accusations of instigating civil war onto the other side. In the Perusine War, Lucius Antonius claimed that he was taking up the cause of Italy's dispossessed citizens and defending the republic against the tyranny of the triumvirs,²² while Octavian demonized Fulvia – a meddlesome woman – as the instigator rather than Lucius, brother of his triumviral colleague Antony.²³ In the *Histories*, Sallust uses the speeches of Lepidus and Philippus to demonstrate similar finger-pointing and mutual accusations of civil war. The rebel Lepidus bristles that Sulla has called him seditious (*Verum ego seditiosus, uti Sulla ait*, 1.49.16 R/1.55.16 M), and reminds his audience that Sulla and his cronies were the ones who nearly destroyed the state in open civil war (1.49.19). On the other hand, Philippus the conservative consular reminds the senate that Lepidus was the one who marched on the city (1.67.10, above); passing the *senatus consultum ultimum* would not be the *cause* of civil war, but rather was the only sufficient response to the one that had already been brought by Lepidus.

Sallust underscores the parallels between Lepidus' uprising and the triumviral period by imitating Ciceronian style and themes in Philippus' speech. In particular, the speech echoes Cicero's *Philippics* in its denunciation of senatorial complacency against a colleague-turned-enemy of the state. Philippus, a standard-bearer of the old Sullan guard, addressed the senate in an attempt to spur them to action against Lepidus (1.67 R, discussed above); his unsparing harangue berates the senate for their delay in responding to the revolt and seeks a *senatus consultum ultimum* to put down the revolt.²⁴ Likewise, beginning in 44, Cicero spoke out vigorously against Antony, urging the senate to name him a *hostis* and declare war. The speech of Philippus in the *Histories* and Cicero's *Philippics*²⁵ emphasize similar themes: the safety of the *res publica* is at stake, and the SCU is Rome's best option against the public enemies threatening it from within.²⁶ The thematic echoes are reinforced by linguistic ones; Sallust's Philippus frequently seems to borrow language and phrases from Cicero.²⁷ Furthermore, as Syme pointed out, both Cicero and Philippus had another tacit purpose. Just as Cicero supported Octavian's non-traditional early commands, Philippus was the author of the proposal that sent Pompey against Sertorius with unearned proconsular *imperium*.²⁸ As is discussed in [Chapter Four](#), the deleterious effect of irregular commands and honors on the republic was an important theme of the *Histories*; the precedent set by Pompey for overturning both law and custom had paved the way for the constitutional carnage that was being wrought by Octavian when Sallust was writing. While Cicero and Philippus looked to provide justification for their support of irregular provisions by citing an imminent threat to the *res publica*,²⁹ both men in fact hastened the demise of the republic by enabling two of the most aggressive agents of its destruction.

Finally, as elsewhere in the *Histories*,³⁰ the parallels between narrative time and compositional time are underscored by the presence of successive generations from the same family; history seems not only cyclical, but hereditary. The Lepidus of the *Histories*, whose depiction therein is ambivalent at best,³¹ was the father of the triumvir. If, as has been suggested, Lepidus' speech is the opening set-piece of the *Histories*, its position lends it importance; the speech is Sallust's vehicle to introduce the work's larger themes, including the decline of *virtus* and the threat of *dominatio*.³² Lepidus could easily have been describing Sallust's own world; the crimes so vehemently deplored in this speech were being committed once again at the time of composition by the triumvirs, including the younger Lepidus.³³ Furthermore, Philippus' son, the consul of 56 BCE, was the stepfather of Octavian (having married Octavian's mother Atia in 61). Just as Lepidus' criticisms of the Sullans could just as easily be applied to his own son and his triumviral colleagues, Philippus' criticisms target the same kind of acts his step-grandson committed, such as marching on the city, as in 1.67.10 (as was mentioned above). Sallust's evocation of Cicero in the context of Lepidus' revolt is especially ironic because of Cicero's fateful entanglements with this next generation. Whatever his private feelings, Cicero maintained a publicly cordial relationship with Lepidus until March 43, when the latter began urging a reconciliation with Antony.³⁴ Once the senate declared Antony a public enemy later that year, Cicero turned on Lepidus the son and openly denounced him just as his allusive counterpart in the *Histories* had denounced the father.³⁵ And, in a stroke of irony that surely did not escape Sallust's notice, it was the step-grandson of that same Philippus who ultimately used Cicero's life as a bargaining chip to negotiate with Antony.

As was mentioned above, another way in which Sallust uses allusion to conflate narrative and compositional time is by invoking the civil war where it does not (or should not) exist in the *Histories*. The art of disguising civil war as a foreign conflict had a strong tradition by Sallust's day. For example, Pompey had meticulously framed his war with Sertorius as the conquest of Spain in order to obtain a triumph; as Sallust wrote the *Histories*, the triumvirs Octavian, Mark Antony, and Lepidus were simultaneously boasting that their pact would put an end to civil wars while continuing to wage wars against fellow Roman citizens (e.g., the "Liberators," Lucius Antonius and Fulvia, Sextus Pompey).³⁶ By creating the appearance of civil war outside its historical context in his narrative of the 70s (say, by making a squabble between gladiators sound like a civil war), Sallust emphasizes the continuity with his own day, and uses the parallel he creates with the present to emphasize how easily labels can be manipulated to suit one's own agenda.

To return to the example at the beginning of this chapter: Fragment 4.27 effectively turns the Spartacus War into a *bellum civile* by describing the

revolt's leaders in language more typically suited to the Roman civic sphere. Sallust uses *consultare* infrequently, preferring *consulere*;³⁷ when he does use *consultare*, however, it exclusively refers to deliberations among civic bodies, most often Romans.³⁸ Sallust's audience had been conditioned by earlier depictions of slave revolts to expect their leaders to act like barbarians.³⁹ The use of *consultare* to describe the deliberations of runaway slaves confounds this expectation. The same applies to Sallust's use of the verb *dissidere* here. Like *consultare*, *dissidere* can have strong political connotations.⁴⁰ This is the only use of *dissidere* in the extant Sallustian corpus, but in contemporary literature, *dissidere*, like *consultare*, belonged to the deliberative sphere. It is most commonly used in the late republic to describe political quarrels, disagreements, or dissent.⁴¹

Sallust's language in another passage on the Spartacus War (again describing a conflict among the revolt leaders) reinforces this image of the gladiators as pseudo-senators:

Atque illi certamine consili inter se iuxta seditionem erant, Crixo et gentis eiusdem Gallis atque Germanis obviam ire et ultro <of>ferre pugnam cupientibus, contra Sparta<co impetum dissuadente> ...

(3.42D R/3.96D M)

But they (sc. the fugitives) were close to mutiny among themselves because of a dispute over the plan; although Crixus and the Gauls of his clan and the Germans desired to go directly and willingly offer battle, Spartacus, on the other hand, was discouraging the attack ...

Although the term *seditio* frequently refers to a mutiny or uprising among troops in late republican prose (e.g., Caes. *BCiv.* 1.87.3), it often has stronger political connotations, denoting something more like civil disturbance, even civil war.⁴² Sallust is particularly partial to this usage,⁴³ and especially so in the *Histories*. Sallust closely links *seditio* with civil war in the prologue:

Postquam remoto metu Punico simultates exercere vacuum fuit, plurumae turbae, seditiones et ad postremum bella civilia orta sunt ...

(1.12 R/1.12 M)

Later, when the Punic threat was removed, there was an opening for them to cultivate disputes, and many riots, civil disturbances, and, at last, civil wars arose.

Here, *seditio* appears to be the immediate predecessor of *bella civilia*, the final step in the breakdown of the *res publica* before the outbreak of open civil war. Sallust uses *seditio* similarly in the speech of Philippus, setting it in opposition to *pax*:

... et ad eum concurrere homines omnium ordinum corruptissimi, flagrant inopia et

... and the most corrupt men of all ranks rushed to him, inflamed by poverty and desires, disturbed by the consciousness of crimes, for whom there was contentment in civil discord, unrest in peace.

In the *Histories*, then, *seditio* can imply something more than riot or mutiny; it can refer, more specifically, to the sort of civil conflict that threatened to bring down the *res publica*. In light of this, the discordant leaders of the slave rebellion look more like competing Roman politicians, or even leaders of rival factions in civil war; their conflict seems to be depicted as one of the series of civil conflicts that disrupted Rome in the 70s BCE. Contrary to Cicero's suggestion that *seditiones* were necessary for the vitality and evolution of the republic,⁴⁴ Sallust viewed *seditio* as one of the steps of political decay, leading directly to *bella civilia*. In the *Histories*, Sallust uses the slave revolt to model this process of decay by analogy, depicting the slave revolt as fractured and failing due to the same causes that had fractured the Roman state.

Thus far, there is nothing about the language of this passage to point us to the civil wars of the 30s in particular, and as we shall see throughout this study many of Sallust's allusions have some degree of openness. However, the broader context of the passage might draw our attention more directly to triumphal politics. Sallust's reader, of course, did not encounter this passage as an eight-word fragment, but rather as part of a complete narrative. The quarrel described in 4.27 R takes place between the three leaders of the slave revolt, Spartacus, Gaius Gannicus, and Castus; that is, a triumvirate. It is worth noting that this is not the first broken triumvirate in the slave revolt. At the beginning of the revolt, Spartacus and a Gaul named Crixus shared command of the rebel forces, and Livy, Appian, Florus, and Orosius name Oenomaus (like Crixus, a Gaul) as a third co-commander;⁴⁵ Appian indicates that by early in 72 BCE, the rebel forces split into two factions, one under Spartacus and one under Crixus and Oenomaus.⁴⁶ That split proved fatal to Crixus; he was killed, along with two-thirds of his army, when he was tracked down in the Garganus Mountains by the Roman legion under Quintus Arrius.⁴⁷ Thus, twice did infighting cause a division in the rebel forces, and twice that division led to the defeat of one of the detachments by the Romans. It is, of course, impossible to know what the course of the war would have been if Crixus, Oenomaus, and the Gauls and Germans had not split off from Spartacus and his followers, but it is worth noting that before the split, the combined rebel forces had managed to stymie the Roman army for over a year. Just as the triumvirs had initially banded together against Caesar's assassins, the leaders of the slave revolt had

formed an uneasy *de facto* alliance against the Romans but were driven apart by their competing individual interests. The *discordia* among Sallust's slave leaders suggests that shared power is doomed, as the entire power structure will breakdown as factions break off.

Furthermore, by reframing the slave revolt as a civil war, Sallust shows how mutable these categories are. Pompey, Octavian, and others had demonstrated that it took only a few clever rhetorical tricks to "rebrand" a civil conflict as a foreign one; by employing these tricks, the winners could celebrate their victories without the poor optics of having destroyed fellow citizens.⁴⁸ After defeating the remnants of Sertorius' forces after Sertorius' assassination, Pompey set up a monument in the Pyrenees celebrating his victory "over the Spanish";⁴⁹ the war against Sertorius thus became the conquest of foreigners in Spain rather than the continued persecution of Roman citizens after the proscriptions had nominally ended. Julius Caesar was reminded of the people's unease with civil war victories when the viewers of his quadruple triumph recoiled from his images of the defeated Scipio and Cato.⁵⁰ Caesar's adoptive son Octavian learned from his mistakes and strove to downplay any suggestion of civil war; thus, Sextus Pompey became a "pirate" rather than a Roman aristocrat. With his creation of "civil war" in the context of the slave revolt, Sallust uses a similar sleight of hand to make a civil war appear rather than disappear. Labels are not everything, but they do matter. Sallust's imitation of Octavian and Pompey's conflation of foreign and Roman enemies thus demonstrates how easily representations can be manipulated to shape perceptions of reality.

The preceding examples are meant to be illustrative and not a comprehensive catalogue of the *Histories'* allusions. In the following chapters I will explore several others in more detail, and I have no doubt that more may be discovered by other readers of the *Histories*.

II Training the reader

To reiterate, I do not mean to suggest that the *Histories* are nothing but an elaborate allegory and that Sallust's *only* interest was criticizing the triumvirs. There is no reason to think the historian cannot be concerned with the past, present, and future all at once, and use his narrative to explore the relationship between them. Analogical historiography's allusive nature keeps the work's temporality open and allows the reader's interpretation to move freely between different periods (including but not limited to the explicit narrative time). Sallust's allusions had other effects, as well, and the following sections explore two ways in which they seem to function in the *Histories*. First, the

allusions function as an interpretive exercise for Sallust's readers, who face a ruling regime whose deceptive messaging and propaganda requires similar "decoding." Second, the allusions are a locus for processing the trauma of the civil wars; the temporal loosening created by allusion rather than direct confrontation of contemporary events creates a safe narrative space in which to reflect on Rome's self-destructive tendencies.

Initially, one might be tempted to suggest that there is no need for elaborate justification of analogical historiography and that the obvious reason to critique current affairs indirectly through analogy and allusion rather than directly is that it offers the author plausible deniability, or what Stephen Hinds termed the "hermeneutic alibi."⁵¹ The existence of multiple plausible interpretations of the *Histories* (e.g., interpreting the work as a straightforward chronicle of the events of the 70s and early 60s) provides Sallust a cover. Denying that the *Histories* were a reflection on contemporary Rome might seem disingenuous, but the defense (albeit thin) provided by the use of allusion may have been enough to satisfy those in power.⁵² However, it is worth noting that the triumvirs do not seem to have pursued literary dissenters as aggressively as, for example, Nero did.⁵³ It is also not clear how much attention Sallust would have attracted for critical or subversive writings, given his absence from public life after 44. Thus, while plausible deniability is an obvious reason to write allusively, in the case of the *Histories* I do not think it is the only or even the most probable one. Sallust's own words suggest that he saw the fear of consequences as a poor reason for literary restraint. In the *Jugurtha*, Sallust expressed his disapproval of Sisenna's restrained treatment of Sulla,⁵⁴ suggesting that the earlier historian refrained from critique of the dictator in order to avoid the ire of Sullan supporters (and perhaps of Sulla himself, depending on how early Sisenna began work on his *Histories*).⁵⁵ If we can take Sallust at his word, this criticism suggests that he did not prioritize partisanship and fear of its consequences,⁵⁶ and his use of allusion was meant to do more than establish plausible deniability.

To better understand the utility of analogical historiography, we might profitably turn our attention from what Sallust might have been avoiding (disfavor or persecution) to what he was trying to accomplish with the *Histories*. From this perspective, one positive function of Sallust's allusions to the triumviral period in his account of the 70s is that they ask his audience to be careful, critical readers. As was discussed in the Introduction, history-writing was Sallust's only recourse in the face of a decaying state, and an important function of the *Histories* was to train the audience to deconstruct and interpret history as it was happening. Just as his dense and unbalanced prose style is calculated to shake the reader out of complacency, Sallust's analogical approach to history asks the reader to work through multiple layers

of interpretation. By doing so, Sallust's readers learn through exercise to approach not only history, but also contemporary Rome with a critical eye, rejecting the self-satisfied presentation of a triumphant Rome perpetuated by the triumvirs and digging more deeply to expose the speciousness of their claims of peace and concord.

Sallust's prose style has often been seen as a reflection of his view of Roman affairs.⁵⁷ The features of Sallust's terse and often confounding prose style have been catalogued by scholars.⁵⁸ In both the monographs and the *Histories*, Sallust shows a marked preference for archaic orthography and diction. He rejects the *i*-spelling popularized by Caesar and Cicero in favor of the more archaic *u*-spelling (e.g., *maxume* for *maxime*, *optumus* for *optimus*).⁵⁹ Sallust also frequently borrows vocabulary from archaic authors, particularly Cato.⁶⁰ For example, he may have inherited from Cato his predilection for nouns ending in *-tudo*, a form which Gellius claims added *dignitas* to a work (17.2.19).⁶¹ Sallust owes a clear debt to Thucydides, too, for many of the stylistic features of his prose; the influence of the Greek historian is frequently evident in both Sallust's lexical choices and in his syntax.⁶² Dionysius' description of the brevity of Thucydides' prose could just as easily apply to Sallust:

ἐκδηλότατα δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ χαρακτηρισκώτατά ἐστι τό τε πειρᾶσθαι δι' ἐλαχίστων ὀνομάτων πλείστα σημαίνειν πράγματα καὶ πολλὰ συντιθέναι νοήματα εἰς ἓν, καὶ <τὸ> ἔτι προσδεχόμενόν τι τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἀκούσεσθαι καταλείπειν· ὅφ' ὧν ἀσαφὲς γίνεται τὸ βραχύ.

(*Thuc.* 24)

[Thucydides'] most conspicuous and characteristic traits are his attempt to say the largest number of things in the fewest words and his compression of many thoughts into one, and the fact that he leaves the listener expecting to hear something more. By all of these things, his brevity is rendered obscure.⁶³

Sallust's brevity is achieved by his use of a variety of constructions, including ellipsis and asyndeton (especially in strings of nouns or historical infinitives). Sallust also adopts Thucydides' frequent use of neuter adjectives and participles as abstract substantives.⁶⁴ The overall flow of Sallust's prose is very similar to Thucydides' insofar as it displays very little "flow" at all. Common parallel phrases (e.g., *pars ... pars*, *alii ... alii*) are thrown off balance (*pars ... alii*), plural verbs are paired with singular collective subjects, and what appear to be clear antitheses are, on closer inspection, untidy and asymmetrical.⁶⁵ The overall effect is an abrupt, imbalanced prose measured to arrest and surprise the reader at every turn.⁶⁶

It is difficult to say how Sallust compared stylistically with his contemporaries, for only snippets of their works survive. However, it is clear

that his prose style is in marked contrast with the prescriptions of that contemporary tastemaker *par excellence*, Cicero, who never wrote a full-scale history himself but laid out recommendations for authors of histories in various of his works. The basic features of the style of historical prose advised by Cicero are long, balanced periods, parallelism, fluency, and smoothness.⁶⁷ If the overall effects advised by Cicero are balance, flow, and symmetry, Sallust achieves exactly their opposites.

Sallust's stylistic alignment with Thucydides and alienation from Cicero carries over to his theme and worldview, as well. Cicero's recommended style of historical prose – the balanced, stately style which Cicero himself favored – suggests a confident, secure author whose prose reflects the perceived harmony of his world.⁶⁸ Or, as Woodman remarks: "To Sallust it must therefore have seemed that Cicero's own style – characterized by balance, amplitude, and corresponsion – did indeed reflect a complacency and conservatism which were utterly at odds with the attitude adopted in the *Bellum Catilinae*."⁶⁹ Sallust's unbalanced and abrupt prose mirrors his conception of Rome as discordant and fractured; furthermore, his use of unexpected vocabulary and constructions asks his audience to pay keen attention and thus to reject the complacency allowed by Cicero's harmonious style.⁷⁰ The Thucydidean mindset, on the other hand, is a much closer match for Sallust's worldview. Those edgy and abrupt constructions transport us back to

that whole hard-edged political and military world that Thucydides described, where words were so often at odds with deeds, where decisions were so often reached on the basis of expediency and profit but also in anger and miscalculation, where morality suffered, and where ... *stasis*, civil conflict, provided the prism through which the most brutal and unsettling aspects of warfare became particularly visible and stark.⁷¹

Thematically, Thucydides and Sallust shared a preoccupation with the opposition between words and deeds, and in particular how that relationship is further strained in the context of civil war. The words/deeds antithesis figured prominently in the prefaces of the monographs, as Sallust weighed the public good of writing history against political service.⁷² As we have seen, in a passage that loudly echoes Thucydides' excursus on *stasis* in Corcyra the disparity between words and deeds arises again in the preface of the *Histories* as Sallust describes the pernicious flexibility of language during civil strife.

Postquam remoto metu Punico simultates exercere vacuum fuit, plurimae turbae, seditiones et ad postremum bella civilia orta sunt, dum pauci potentes, quorum in gratiam plerique concesserant, sub honesto patrum aut plebis nomine dominationes adfectabant; bonique et mali cives adpellati non ob merita in rem publicam—omnibus pariter corruptis—sed uti quisque locupletissimus et iniuria validior, quia praesentia defendebat, pro bono ducebatur

Later, when the Punic threat was removed, there was an opening for them to cultivate disputes, and many riots, civil disturbances, and, at last, civil wars arose, while the powerful few, under whose influence most had fallen, were aiming for tyrannies under the honorable name of the senate or the plebs, and citizens were called “good” or “bad” not according to their worthiness of the republic, since everyone was equally corrupt; but as each man was most wealthy and could inflict the greatest harm, he was considered good, because he was protecting the status quo.⁷³

καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιοῦσει. τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθῆς δειλία εὐπρεπής, τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ξυνετὸν ἐπὶ πάν ἀργόν

(Thucydides 3.82.4)

And they transformed the traditional value of words in accordance with what seemed justified. For reckless audacity was considered courage on behalf of comrades, prudent forethought was considered specious cowardice, moderation a veil for spinelessness, and capacity to understand everything was considered laziness about everything.

The latter passage is notoriously slippery, and scholars from Dionysius of Halicarnassus to the present have debated Thucydides’ precise meaning.⁷⁴ A common thread is that war, particularly civil war, puts a unique pressure on our use of language to communicate. And how could it not? When the categories of “citizen” and “enemy” (or even “family” and “enemy”) become confused, it is natural to question our use of these categories and even our ability to define things. It is not the case that civil war flips a switch and suddenly terms of absolute value are stripped of all meaning, leaving us to call white “black” and cats “dogs.” Language is and always has been contested, the relationship between words and deeds is a constant negotiation, the word is always at war.⁷⁵ But civil war imposes a unique burden on language as its participants – and historians – struggle to find ways to describe it. One’s own engagement in a civil conflict must be justified by laying blame unequivocally on the other side. In a foreign conflict, this is not a difficult task, but it is tricky business during a civil war: how do I sell this as a *bellum iustum*? Can I wrangle an SCU out of the senate and have my personal enemy declared a *hostis*? For the side that emerges victorious from a civil war, there is the further dilemma of how to celebrate one’s victory when it comes at the expense of fellow citizens; there are issues both technical (am I eligible for a triumph?) and optical (what quantity of crocodile tears will mollify my opponents without alienating my supporters?). In this context, it is incumbent upon observers to be able to ‘read’ history as it is happening and evaluate the actors’ claims for themselves. Reading Sallust’s *Histories* is an exercise in parsing and interrogation at both the sentence level and the thematic level.

Allusions, like Sallust's jarring prose style, must be unpacked to be appreciated; the *Histories* thus allow the reader to practice the same critical skills that will help them evaluate the claims of the triumvirs (and others).⁷⁶

III Allusion, repetition, and trauma

In addition to the stylistic and thematic similarities noted above, another characteristic of Thucydides' work that seems to have made a strong impression on Sallust is the claustrophobic recognition of history's repetitive tendencies. History can be a guide for the future, since the things that have happened are likely to happen again "in accordance with human nature" (κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, 1.22). *Stasis*, in particular, is bound to recur "as long as human nature stays the same" (ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ, 3.82.2). Our nature, Thucydides further suggests, inclines us to behave well in times of peace and prosperity and unspeakably badly under the pressures of war. This is one difference between Thucydides' Greeks and Sallust's Romans: it is peace, not war, the Romans do not know how to bear.⁷⁷ Roman *stasis* recurs not as a response to the pressures of war, but rather when there are no foreign enemies to conquer and human vices flourish in the vacuum (*Cat.* 10, *Jug.* 41–2, *Hist.* 1.12 R).

Although Sallust does not *explicitly* claim that Roman civil war is destined to repeat, the notion is implicit in all three of his works. The *Catiline* shows the civil strife of Catiline's uprising; its internecine nature is underscored by the final, arresting scene of friends, neighbors, and acquaintances having fallen in battle on both sides (*Cat.* 61). But Catiline was not produced in a vacuum; he is the natural product of "so great and so corrupt a city" (*in tanta tamque corrupta civitate*, *Cat.* 14.1), a city which had been in free-fall since Sulla's dictatorship (*Cat.* 12). The conflict over the Numidian throne in the *Jugurtha* demonstrates that civil strife, as a product of human nature, knows no borders (and that triumvirates do not tend to work); the Romans, perhaps, have a special relationship with civil war,⁷⁸ but not an exclusive one. And the *Histories* depict the civil conflicts of the 70s and 60s, ranging from the long war with Sertorius to the uprising of Lepidus and the public violence addressed in a speech by the consul Cotta (2.43 R/2.47 M). Laid end-to-end, Sallust's narratives chronicle a solid 40 years of civil discord. Allusion is itself a form of repetition – the author repeats a word, a phrase, a figure, a scene, or an event. By invoking contemporary conflicts in the *Histories* through allusion, Sallust emphasizes civil war's repetitive nature; he stretches this discordant chain up to his present day, and gestures toward an unknown future.

Beyond the linguistic, semantic, and philosophical injuries perpetuated by

those who twisted and abused language for their own purposes, the triumviral period inflicted more literal violence on its survivors, as well. Proscriptions, land confiscations, local uprisings, famine – there was essentially no segment of the Italian world that was unaffected. Civil war in particular (the type of conflict that characterized the triumviral period) also brings with it a threat to national identity. When violence is inflicted from the outside, such as by another nation in a foreign war, there is a common enemy against whom to unite. If the enemy looks and speaks differently from you, worships other gods and holds strange values, the lines are easy to draw. In a civil war, when the injury comes from within the community, how are the *hostes* identified?⁷⁹ This ambiguity, I argue, is what made the civil wars not just an atrocity for the Romans of Sallust's day, but a collective or cultural trauma according to modern sociological definitions. In particular, the conflicts of the first century were traumatic insofar as they threatened to shatter the notion of a Roman identity, recognized by scholars as a key criterion in defining cultural trauma (as opposed to non-traumatizing group suffering). This trauma-based reading of the *Histories* will thus be influenced by elements of both psychoanalytic and sociological theory, as will be outlined in more detail below.

The *Histories*' allusions reflect the trauma of the Roman civil wars in two ways. First, the indirect nature of allusion permitted Sallust to face a trauma that was still ongoing, whereas direct confrontation can only come after a period of latency.⁸⁰ As was discussed above, at the time Sallust was writing the *Histories*, the triumviral wars seemed to be the continuation of an unrelenting and endless conflict. Unlike the soldiers of the First World War, whose post-war "neuroses" were so central to the development of early trauma theory, Sallust had no "home front" to which he might return; writing in the 30s, he could find neither temporal nor geographical distance from the civil wars he was attempting to process. Those same wars still raged throughout Italy and gave no space (physical or psychic) in which their full impact could be evaluated; the critical perspective necessary to begin working through trauma was unavailable. The indirect approach of analogical historiography allows Sallust to mediate the horrors of recent history and enable his audience to comprehend it. For example, although Octavian's bloody ascent was too recent and too close for critical processing, it might be possible for Sallust's audience to contemplate Pompey's *cursus*-smashing rise to power as an analogy. In this way Sallust creates an opportunity for his audience to reckon with Rome's self-destructive tendencies by confronting earlier iterations of civil discord but avoids incapacitating them with the full force of their traumatic present.

More tentatively, I would also like to suggest that the *Histories*' historical allusions constitute a form of traumatic repetition. Scholars have noted the connections among allusion, traumatic repetition, and civil war in various

authors, but Sallust has not yet been part of the conversation. The *Aeneid* has received particular attention in this context,⁸¹ as have its ‘successors’ in both the epic and historical traditions.⁸² David Quint examined the function of repetition in the *Aeneid*, in which he identified two types of repetition. The first half of the epic shows the Trojans endlessly trying to re-create Troy in “an obsessive circular return to a traumatic past.”⁸³ They fail each time, never re-creating their home or shedding their self-identification as the defeated, as victims, and their wandering is extended seemingly without end. The second half of the poem signals a shift to a more progressive form of repetition, in which the Trojans re-create the Trojan War (now against the Latins). This time, the repetition comes with mastery; the Trojans are again compelled to return to their past, but this time they emerge victorious. The epic’s two types of repetition thus enact the tension of the Augustan regime, which struggled to negotiate its relationship with the civil war that produced it: “The negative and positive forms of repetition in the two halves of the epic correspond to the double message of Augustan propaganda: the injunction to forget a past of civil war (so as to stop repeating it), and the demand that this past be remembered and avenged (and so be repeated and mastered).”⁸⁴ The repetition in Sallust, as I shall argue in more detail below, also consists of both types, although the regressive form dominates.

To go a step further, I would also like to suggest that the original trauma which Sallust invokes in the *Histories*’ is the fratricide of Remus. In this reading, Rome’s repeated return to civil war is compulsive, and stems from the foundational trauma of Romulus’ murder of Remus. It was no coincidence that Augustus preferred the story of Aeneas to that of Romulus, and highlighted the former’s role in the national identity in preference to the latter.⁸⁵ The version of Rome’s origin story highlighting Remus’ murder at the hands of his brother had taken shape in the mid-Republic, and by the beginning of the principate, that act of fratricide had come to be seen as a cornerstone of Rome’s discordant identity.⁸⁶ The Romans had been embroiled in nearly constant civil strife since the days of the Gracchi; what compelled them toward self-destruction? Sallust’s explicit explanation for this was that, in the aftermath of the Punic Wars, Rome lacked a worthy foreign enemy, ambition had no appropriate outlet, and Rome turned its destructive energy upon itself.⁸⁷ This trope was common enough, and neither began nor ended with Sallust.⁸⁸ However, the persistent repetition of civil war in the *Histories*, both in the narrative itself and by allusion, suggests another explanation for Rome’s drive to self-destruction. Romulus’ murder of Remus was in essence a curse, and the Romans were driven by a relentless fate originating in that moment of transgressive violence. While others, like Sallust’s contemporary Horace expressed this fear openly,⁸⁹ Sallust does not say as much in the extant

fragments of the *Histories*. However, his persistent, even compulsive, return to and narrative creation of civil war suggests that he thematizes this traumatic repetition, or reenacts it himself, or both. By proposing this reading, especially the suggestion that Sallust's historiographical style reveals an attempt (conscious or unconscious) to work through Rome's ongoing trauma, I do not mean to suggest that the *Histories* are merely a personal *cri de coeur* or even that he envisioned his own work as a salve for Rome's wounds. Sallust was no doubt a serious and unflinching analyst of history and certainly would not have conceptualized his project through the relatively modern lens of "trauma theory." However, as we shall see, we need not presume Sallust saw himself as an agent of communal psychological healing to believe that the *Histories* could have provided at least some readers with a narrative space in which to begin processing their trauma.

The following discussion is predicated on the assertion that the Roman wars of the first century BCE constituted a collective trauma. Modern theorists have drawn careful distinctions between "trauma to a community" and a "collective" or "cultural trauma."⁹⁰ There is a difference, many argue, between a disturbing event that affects a community and one that is converted into a collective trauma. A group may experience something horrifying that has traumatic effects on individuals, but this does not necessarily constitute a *cultural* trauma:

At the collective level, a socially mediated process must occur for a horrendous event to cause cultural trauma. Once the social process of cultural trauma has concluded, those who were not personally exposed to the horrendous event will acknowledge the traumatic nature of the event and its relevance for the society at large, and will feel personally involved in – and accept responsibility for – overcoming its consequences.⁹¹

Social trauma is thus something greater than the sum of many individual traumas. In particular, for a trauma that affects a group to become a "collective trauma," it must constitute a threat to the community's identity, "marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (more on this below).⁹² Jeffrey Alexander argues that this process is mediated through so-called "carrier groups,"⁹³ groups composed of individuals who may or may not have directly experienced the trauma themselves, but who try to demonstrate to the community the wide repercussions of the trauma in order to encourage the group to understand and attempt to make meaning of its suffering.⁹⁴ The constituents of the carrier group need not belong to a particular identity (social class, religious group, generation, nationality, etc.); their primary uniting quality is that "they have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims – for what might be called 'meaning making' – in the public sphere."⁹⁵ The carrier group establishes

the “master narrative” of the trauma; this master narrative articulates the perpetrators and victims of the trauma, its effects on those directly impacted, and its consequences for society at large.⁹⁶ This narrative will then constitute a critical element of the process of post-traumatic identity revision.

Collective trauma often occurs with a concomitant process of “normative inversion.”⁹⁷ In this process, the traumatized community attempts to redefine its identity by focusing on the violation of its values by an outside group in what Jan Assmann describes as “contra-distinctive self-definition.”⁹⁸ By recalling the violent transgression of the foreigners or outsiders who perpetrated the trauma, a society reconstitutes and re-stabilizes its identity and values against this counter-example.⁹⁹ Encouraged and enabled by the carrier group’s development of a new master narrative, the community re-constructs its sense of identity, neutralizes (or at least lessens) the raw force of the trauma through “routinization”; this process thus makes way for the community to move forward, remembering the trauma but not remaining incapacitated by it.¹⁰⁰

In the context of these criteria, I would argue that Rome’s experience in the civil wars of the first century may be considered a cultural or collective trauma. The violence of the first century was undeniably horrific, but this alone does not necessarily constitute a cultural trauma. I would suggest that what elevated the civil wars from “many instances of individual suffering” to a collective trauma is the shattering effect they had on the Romans’ sense of their shared identity.¹⁰¹ The process of normative inversion, of finding a way to distinguish the community from the perpetrators of a trauma and, in doing so, to reassert the group’s own values, is an integral part of the healing process (as outlined by Alexander). However, civil war poses a challenge to the model of normative inversion. In civil war, the injury has not come from outside the group, but from within; the perpetrators and the victims, however you identify them, are all members of the same community, with (presumably, or at least formerly) shared values. The community’s identity has thus been perverted from within rather than destroyed from without. Alexandra Eckert has made the case that, according to Alexander’s criteria, the Sullan proscriptions constituted a cultural trauma. Not only did countless Romans suffer individual trauma during this time, those who were not directly affected by the war or the proscriptions were not exempt from their broader consequences.¹⁰² As Eckert points out, the internecine nature of the trauma of Sulla’s proscriptions forces the Romans into mental gymnastics to reckon with it. The shift from inter-cultural to intra-cultural normative inversion requires “accentuating a violation of values as alien and abominable.”¹⁰³ In Eckert’s example, Sulla is likened to Hannibal by Valerius Maximus in an attempt to classify his actions as specifically foreign.¹⁰⁴

Valerius Maximus, of course, had the blessing of hindsight in his account of Sulla; Sallust, on the other hand, did not have the luxury of critical distance as he attempted to process the civil wars. According to Alexander's model, the carrier group takes on the responsibility of creating a new master narrative of the trauma behind which the community can unite and reconstitute its shared identity and values. As a historian, Sallust is certainly equipped to take on this part of the carrier group's role; narrative creation is quite literally his job. As has been noted, this model does not require Sallust's conscious or purposeful participation in this role; that is, this reading does not require us to believe that he intentionally set out to remedy the cultural trauma of the civil wars by writing history for us to see the *Histories* as performing this function.

However, Sallust's role differs from that of traditionally conceived carrier groups insofar as "his" trauma was ongoing at the time of composition. Carrier groups take action in the aftermath of trauma, but in Sallust's conception the triumviral conflicts are merely the latest iteration of what appears to be endless civil discord. This may explain why the *Histories* diverge from Alexander's model in one important respect: they don't name names. Whereas part of the traditional carrier's task is to identify the perpetrators of trauma and hold them accountable, Sallust does *not* write directly about contemporary events; his narrative expressly avoids direct confrontation with the triumvirs or any other current actors. The use of analogy and allusion to address contemporary horrors only indirectly allows Sallust to approach a trauma that is too raw and immediate for direct confrontation. Evaluating the trauma inflicted by the triumvirs as it happened would be impossible; its ongoing nature left no space for the reflection and processing required to write a new master narrative and reconstitute a new group identity. Even though the *Histories* were written too soon to address the civil discord perpetuated by the triumvirs, Sallust could evoke previous iterations of that discord. This absence of direct "naming" draws readers into the multiplicity of the *Histories'* allusions, providing a safe interpretive space within the narrative in which to begin working through their trauma.

The ongoing aspect of Sallust's trauma might also account for the lack of an obviously "unifying" narrative. It is difficult to see the *Histories'* narrative as having a uniting effect, except perhaps to confirm the cynical worldview of like-minded people who already identify with Sallust. Sallust seems, rather, stuck within the cycle of traumatic repetition; his allusions seem to replay the trauma rather than resolve it. This aspect of Sallust's use of allusion might be explained – or at least fruitfully explored – when read in the context of the Freudian theory of the traumatic repetition compulsion. In two of his early works, *Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud observed that trauma victims (including and

especially those who lacked conscious memory of the original trauma) often seem compelled to return to and even re-enact their trauma. This repetition could come in the form of re-creating similar circumstances in real life (e.g., the modern concept of the “cycle of violence”) or re-living the trauma in the medium that fascinated Freud the most: dreams. As an illustration, he described a child’s game of *fort und da*, involving a toy attached to a string. Holding the string, he would throw the toy outside his crib and exclaim “*fort* (gone)!” He would then reel it back in, joyfully exclaiming “*da* (there)!” upon its return.¹⁰⁵ Freud interpreted this game as the child’s rehearsal for the ultimate loss of the mother; by practicing the traumatic separation using the toy as a proxy, the child masters the pain of her loss.¹⁰⁶ Other types of traumatic processing work on a similar model, Freud suggested. Indirect repetition of a trauma through re-enactment or dreams allow (or force) the trauma sufferer retroactively to attempt to master the original trauma; in this formulation, the Freudian psychotherapist’s job is to guide the patient safely from compulsive repetition to active remembering.¹⁰⁷

What follows is not meant as a slavish application of a particular psychoanalytic theory or a claim for this as the exclusive reading of the text. As the trauma studies scholar Cathy Caruth and others have demonstrated, Freud’s work on trauma is “good to think with” even if one does not subscribe to Freudian analysis *in toto*.¹⁰⁸ However, scholars do not agree about the validity of “scaling up” every feature of individual trauma (such as the repetition compulsion, as discussed above) in this way to apply to a collective or a group. Alexander, in establishing his criteria for collective trauma, explicitly argued against a cultural application of individual trauma theory.¹⁰⁹ However, reading collective trauma through the lens of psychoanalysis can open new interpretive possibilities. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud applies the individual theory of traumatic repression and repetition to a collective entity, as will be discussed in more detail below; Sallust may have anticipated Freud with a similar attempt to make sense of what he saw as a tendency of the Roman people as a community. Recent scholarship has followed Freud in scaling up this framework to examine traumatic repetition as a collective or cultural phenomenon.¹¹⁰ As studies of psychoanalysis, trauma, and literature have become more popular over the last two decades, Caruth has been perhaps the most prolific and influential proponent of these readings. In particular, Freud’s theory of the traumatic repetition compulsion has consistently been at the heart of Caruth’s analysis, featuring prominently in her seminal text *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and continuing to play a central role in 2014’s *Literature in the Ashes of History*. With the repetition compulsion as her starting point, Caruth explores how traumatic repression and repetition are enacted in a variety of texts (both literary and film). Caruth

focuses on “insistently recurring” words, images, and motifs, which function like recurring nightmares. She argues that these repeated textual returns are attempts to comprehend the incomprehensible, to belatedly understand and repair the original wound.¹¹¹

Although my intent here is certainly not to offer a specifically Freudian interpretation of the *Histories*, as was discussed above, Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* offers a *comparandum* for my use of this model in thinking about Sallust. *Moses and Monotheism* was Freud’s final published work, written over several years in the 1930s; it was begun while Freud was living in Vienna and published in 1939, after his escape from the Nazi occupation of Austria. In a letter to the writer Arnold Zweig, Freud suggests that his work seeks to understand the current Jewish persecution, and that the explanation will be found in history:

Faced with new persecutions, one asks oneself again how the Jews have come to be what they are and why they have attracted this undying hatred. I soon discovered the formula: Moses created the Jews.

(Freud to Arnold Zweig, 30 May 1934)¹¹²

Furthermore, the answer will be found in not just any history, but in Freud’s novel retelling of it. His account asserts that Moses was an Egyptian and a follower of an Egyptian monotheistic cult. When the pharaoh who headed the cult was killed, Moses led a small group of followers out of Egypt. These followers then killed Moses in rebellion, and later assimilated with another monotheistic group who worshipped Yahweh. However, they were haunted by their murder of Moses, and the guilt of this crime shaped the development of the Jewish religion. This, Freud suggests, is the source of the “taboos, restrictions, abstinences, self-castigations, and cruel sacrifices” which characterized early Judaism.¹¹³ In their continual attempts to atone for this foundational crime, these practices represent a compulsive return to the murder of Moses, but this return is unconscious and comes without acknowledgment and without the intellectual distancing between the remembered past and the lived present. This failure to acknowledge, Freud suggests, is at the heart of anti-Semitism; while Christianity recognizes the crucifixion of Christ as the atonement for original sin, in this reading Jews seem to deny their guilt for the death of Moses.¹¹⁴ In turn, Freud’s own flight from Nazi-occupied Austria results from generations of repetition *without* working through by the Jews, who compulsively return to the murder of Moses through manifestations of guilt in their religious practices, but who cannot yet consciously remember or confront the trauma of the crime.

The Romans had their own “foundational sin” in Romulus’ murder of Remus,¹¹⁵ and were preoccupied with the notion that this fratricide was

persistently re-lived in the form of civil war. The version of Rome's foundation myth in which Romulus killed Remus had existed at least since the middle Republic,¹¹⁶ and seems to have gained special purchase during times of civil strife.¹¹⁷ The Roman self-consciousness about Romulus' curse is reflected in Augustan literature and propaganda. The first emperor, eager to whitewash his own participation in civil wars, distanced himself from this version of the Romulus myth by sanitizing it (downplaying or eliminating the fratricide) or rejecting Romulus entirely in favor of other historical models. The brothers Romulus and Remus never fully shed their connection with civil strife or recaptured their earlier association with *pietas*, and subsequent emperors looked elsewhere for symbols.¹¹⁸

In the first century BCE Romulus still possessed some value as an exemplar, but his legacy became more ambivalent as the seemingly unending civil conflicts unfolded.¹¹⁹ As Cicero demonstrates, the same author could recognize and draw upon Romulus' conflicting characteristics in different contexts. For example, in the *De Re Publica*, Scipio invokes Romulus as a "just king (*iusto rege*)" and "the greatest king (*optimi regis*)"; he further cites Ennius' laudatory lament for the deceased king.¹²⁰ However, in the *De Officiis*, Cicero used Romulus to illustrate the perils of placing political expediency above all. While Lucius Brutus had placed the public good over personal interests by exiling his friend Collatinus, as a member of the Tarquin family, with his kinsmen, Romulus failed to meet this same standard:

At in eo rege, qui urbem condidit, non item. Species enim utilitatis animum pepulit eius; cui cum visum esset utilius solum quam cum altero regnare, fratrem interemit. Omisit hic et pietatem et humanitatem, ut id, quod utile videbatur, neque erat, assequi posset, et tamen muri causa opposuit, speciem honestatis nec probabilem nec sane idoneam. Peccavit igitur, pace vel Quirini vel Romuli dixerim

(*Off.* 3.41)

But not so in the case of the king who founded the city. For the appearance of utility drove his spirit; when it seemed more practical to him to rule alone than with another, he killed his brother. He dismissed *pietas* and humanity in order to follow what appeared practical (though it was not) and countered with the excuse of the wall, a display of honor neither credible nor at all appropriate. Therefore, he sinned – whether, with all due respect, I would speak of Quirinus or Romulus.

Cicero thus thwarts the possible justification of Remus' murder as somehow necessary for Rome's greatness to be realized and instead highlights the fact that the fratricide represented the subversion of values that is also common to civil war.¹²¹ Composed in late 44, *De Officiis* has as its backdrop a new civil war, this one between the assassins of Caesar and the newfound, uneasy coalition of Caesarians. It must have been apparent at that time to even Cicero,

who for so long had clung stubbornly to idealized notions of the past and future, that Romulus had left to his descendants something more complicated.

Horace was even more scathing in his evaluation of Romulus (at least in his triumviral works).¹²² The seventh *Epode*, probably published between 39–37 BCE and thus roughly contemporary with the *Histories*,¹²³ deplores Rome’s apparently uncontrollable drive to self-destruction, and attributes its genesis to that original fratricide:

Sic est: acerba fata Romanos agunt
scelusque fraternae necis,
ut inmeritis fluxit in terram Remi
sacer nepotibus cruor (*Epod.* 7.17–20)

And so it is: bitter fates drive the Romans,
and the crime of fraternal slaughter,
as the blood of undeserving Remus flowed on the earth,
a curse to his descendants.

Like the Jews’ murder of Moses, Romulus’ murder of his brother sets up a terrible cycle of violence and guilt. Moreover, *sacer* is loaded terminology; it suggests that the instigation of civil war is not merely a crime against men, but against the gods and divine order. The crime is so great as to stain even Remus’ descendants, though they may themselves be innocent.¹²⁴ This anxiety about the repetitious nature of civil war and the collective guilt for Remus’ murder resurfaces throughout Horace’s works, particularly the *Epodes*.¹²⁵

At first glance, Romulus does not seem to play a major role in Sallust’s work; he is mentioned by name only once, in Lepidus’ speech in the *Histories* (discussed below).¹²⁶ In the brief archaeology of Rome in the *Catiline*, Sallust refers to the arrival of Aeneas and the Trojans, but no other specific figures in Rome’s earliest history; Romulus is conspicuously omitted.¹²⁷ The *Histories* are not history *ab urbe condita*, and as far as we can tell from the fragments, they did not contain an account of the brothers’ quarrel (or any other version of Rome’s foundation). Sallust explicitly attributed Rome’s descent into discord to political and practical causes: *ambitio* and *avaritia*, the arrogance of the *nobilitas*, the by-products of excessive prosperity.¹²⁸ Divine or supernatural causes (like ancestral curses) are avoided.

Yet, Romulus seems to lurk in the *Histories*’ narrative. He is invoked by name in Lepidus’ speech to the *populus Romanus*. Excoriating Sulla and his minions, Lepidus bitterly compares Sulla to the founder of the city:

Quae cuncta scaevos iste Romulus quasi ab externis rapta tenet

(1.49.5 R/1.55.5 M)¹²⁹

That sinister Romulus holds all these things as if they had been seized from foreigners

The comparison with Romulus functions on multiple levels; Lepidus at once turns Sulla's self-fashioning on its head while also giving it a sinister overtone. With his assumption of monarchical powers and wide-ranging legislative reforms, Sulla had fancied himself a second Romulus, re-conceiving and restructuring the state so radically that he saw himself as its new founder.¹³⁰ The sarcastic *iste* and the insulting *scaevos* undercut his attempt to capitalize on this association; Sulla is fooling no one, Lepidus seems to imply. Furthermore, Lepidus takes the opportunity to remind us that Sulla marched not on a foreign land but on Rome, and his thus ill-gotten gains came at the expense of fellow citizens, not foreigners (*quae cuncta ... quasi ab externis rapta tenet*).

Although Romulus is not named elsewhere in the *Histories*, Sallust seems to invoke him implicitly; given the *Histories*' allusive nature, this indirect method of reference is not unexpected. One fragment of the preface would make an apt description of the dispute between Romulus and Remus:

Nobis primae dissensiones vitio humani ingenii evenere, quod inquires atque indomitum semper in certamine libertatis aut gloriae aut dominationis agit

(1.8 R/1.7 M)¹³¹

Our first disagreements arose from the vice of human nature, which, restless and untamed, always drives forward in its struggle for freedom or glory or power.¹³²

It is hard not to see here an invocation of Romulus and Remus; what is Rome's *prima dissensio* if not the brothers' quarrel? That fraternal *certamen* was waged over both the *gloria* of founding the new city and the *dominatio* that would accrue to the founder. Parallels with Thucydides' observations about human nature have been noted in this passage.¹³³ Like Thucydides, Sallust seems to view it as a fundamental tenet of human nature that the pursuit of power will outweigh all other interests; in addition, he sees it as a foundational principle of the Roman state.

The "curse" of Romulus and its treacherous and infectious character may also be operative in the Letter of Mithridates, which purports to be a missive from the king of Pontus to Arsaces, the Parthian king. As with the other speeches and letters of the *Histories*, much of the scholarship on the Letter of Mithridates has focused on the question of its authenticity. The prevailing view (and it seems reasonable to me) is that, while the letter may well reflect some familiarity with the rhetoric and views of the historical Pontic king, it was composed with a free hand by Sallust.¹³⁴ Of those who believe the letter to be largely a Sallustian creation, most agree that its criticisms of Roman foreign policy and conduct reflect, to some extent, the critical views of historian.¹³⁵

In this letter, Sallust's Mithridates asks Arsaces to join him in resisting the

Roman invasion; this would not only be to his own benefit, Mithridates argues, but in the interest of the Parthians, as well, for after a victory over Pontus the ever-reaching Romans would surely set their sights on the Parthians next. Mithridates reminds Arsaces of Rome's history of conquest and treachery; he cites the conflicts with Philip V, Antiochus III, and Eumenes II as well as the Romans' more recent incursions in the east. Then, in a passage that reads more like the bitter lament of, say, Horace than a genuine letter from a Pontic king, he suggests that everything wrong with the Roman character was indelibly inscribed on it at its inception:

Neque quicquam a principio nisi raptum habere, domum, coniuges, agros, imperium?
Convenas olim sine patria, parentibus, pesti conditos orbis terrarum, quibus non humana
ulla neque divina obstant quin socios amicos, procul iuxta sitos, inopes potentisque trahant
excendant, omniaque non serva et maxume regna hostilia ducant.

(4.60.17 R/4.69.17 M)

[Or are you not aware that] from the beginning [the Romans] have possessed nothing except what they have stolen: their home, their wives, their fields, their empire? That they, once upon a time refugees without a homeland or parents, have been established as a plague upon the whole world, men whom nothing either human or divine prevents from plundering and destroying their allies and friends – those living far and near, both the weak and the powerful – and from considering everything not subject to them, especially monarchies, as their enemies.

Here, Mithridates reaches back to Rome's origins to illustrate for Arsaces the depths of the Romans' untrustworthiness and covetousness. Although the historical examples he has already cited are from the last hundred years or so, Rome's treachery is not such a recent development, but rather was instilled in the Roman character from the very beginning (*a principio*);¹³⁶ once a bandit, always a bandit. Most relevant to our discussion is the charge that, since the beginning, the Romans have been inclined to attack and destroy allies and friends. Mithridates articulates what Sallust avoids saying outright in his own authorial voice: because of the transgressive acts of their founder, Rome's discordant nature is fixed.¹³⁷

Finally, I suggest that the apparent prominence of the historian and tribune C. Licinius Macer in the *Histories* gestures to recent traditions about Rome's foundation myth and its connection with civil strife. Sometime before his death in 66, Macer had published an AUC account of Roman history, and his version of the foundation of the city seems to have emphasized the civil discord that resulted from the death of Remus. Macer, the tribune of 73, seems to have received unusual attention in the *Histories*; Sallust grants Macer one of the *Histories*' four known speeches,¹³⁸ a harangue advocating for the full restoration of the tribunes' authority. There was no urgent reason to record a

speech of Macer, in particular.¹³⁹ From Sulla's death until the full restoration of tribunician rights in 70, agitation on behalf of the plebeians' rights was surely a perennial project of the tribunes, and no doubt many stirring orations were delivered.¹⁴⁰ In Book Two, C. Aurelius Cotta, consul of 75, had given a speech attempting to quell the plebs' violence in the face of a grain shortage (2.43 R/2.47 M). Sallust had "paired" speeches before, to excellent effect.¹⁴¹ Why not give voice to, say, Quintus Opimius, tribune of 75? Why Macer in 73?

Some scholars have seen sympathy and admiration in Sallust's depiction of Macer; as Syme argues, Sallust saw the tribune as "a genuine and convinced champion of popular rights, not, like Lepidus, an opportunist."¹⁴² Besides politics, Sallust may have felt an affinity with Macer because Macer was a fellow historian.¹⁴³ Moreover, his *Histories* seem to have included a version of Rome's foundation that emphasized the tie between Remus' death and civil war. Although few fragments of Macer's history survive,¹⁴⁴ from later accounts that may have used Macer as a source we can glean the general tone of Macer's work, even if most of the original text is unavailable to us. While Macer seems to have avoided accusing Romulus of murdering Remus *sua manu* because of Remus' petty provocation at the wall,¹⁴⁵ he does blame Remus' death on the brothers' dispute over the augury:

At vero Licinius Macer libro primo docet contentionis illius perniciosum exitum fuisse;
namque ibidem obsistentes Remum et Faustulum interfectos

(*FRHist* 27 F3/*OGR* 23.5)

But, indeed, Licinius Macer explains in his first book, the outcome of that dispute was deadly; for Remus and Faustulus were both killed right there while resisting.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy both record variants of the foundation myth that may be traced back to this scene in Macer.¹⁴⁶ Michael Hodgkinson has argued that the Byzantine chronographer John Malalas relied heavily on Macer's version of the Romulus and Remus story, and that the bleakness of Macer's original may be detected in Malalas' much later retelling.¹⁴⁷ Malalas' version dwells on the themes of civil war and factionalism and seems to connect those themes with the death of Remus. In this account, Remus' death is followed by "the usual manifestations of ritual pollution," including natural disasters and civil discord, forcing Romulus to seek advice at Delphi.¹⁴⁸ Based on apparent "hostility" to Romulus in other Licinian fragments, Hodgkinson argues that Malalas' hostility toward Romulus as the origin of Rome's suffering is inherited from Macer.¹⁴⁹

Thus, we might fairly judge that Macer's version was, in a sense, "Sallustian," insofar as it was preoccupied with the ripple effect of Rome's discordant foundation. Wiseman has suggested that Cicero's hostility to Macer

– as an orator, a historian, and a politician – may explain, in part, why Macer’s work, so influential on later authors, seems to have been received with little interest in the author’s lifetime.¹⁵⁰ He also muses that Cicero may have composed his laudatory portrait of Romulus in the *De Re Publica* in reaction to Macer’s unpatriotic tale.¹⁵¹ I would further suggest that the antagonism between Cicero and Macer might explain some of Sallust’s interest in the latter. We have already discussed Sallust’s rejection of the Ciceronian conception of historiography; it is unsurprising that Sallust would embrace the work of a historian whose grim worldview not only aligned closely with his own, but also had drawn the ire of his ideological rival. By granting him a prominent and (apparently) positive role in the *Histories*, Sallust rehabilitates Macer’s memory and reaffirms his conception of Roman history. By doing so, he also implicitly endorses the version of Rome’s foundation myth in which Romulus’ quarrel with Remus brought the curse of civil discord upon future generation of Roman citizens.

Without the full text of the *Histories*, it is, of course, impossible to know the extent of Romulus’ role in Sallust’s narrative, and the fact that Romulus is only mentioned by name once in the extant Sallustian corpus should surely make us cautious in our speculation. However, the combined effect of the allusions described above is to suggest that, like Sallust’s criticisms of contemporary affairs, his judgment on Romulus was implicitly woven into the narrative. Rome’s founder had set his city down a discordant path, and civil war had thus been etched on the national soul since the very beginning. Sallust explicitly presents himself as a sober analyst of history, and avoids openly ascribing historical causation to the gods, curses, or other supernatural phenomena. However, he was also, inescapably, a man of his times. He was surrounded by the same triumviral horrors as was Horace when the latter composed his mournful seventh *Epode*, and I think we must believe he too was deeply affected by them, not just as a historian and political analyst, but as a citizen and an individual. It is not, I think, a contradiction to see the program of allusions in Sallust’s *Histories* as a twofold product of trauma. His persistent use of allusion repeats the trauma of civil war while not directly confronting the audience with injuries too recent for critical contemplation; in this way, Sallust tries to guide his readers to recognize and hopefully begin to process their collective wound. At the same time, this allusive method may also represent Sallust’s own process of coming to terms with the trauma by which he and Rome were still overwhelmed.

IV Analogy and the *Histories*’ call to action

Were the *Histories* meant to process the trauma of the Roman people? Was Sallust working through his own trauma? We can't say. These might not be the right questions to ask. We cannot know whether Sallust saw himself and his fellow Romans as "traumatized" by the civil wars; that is not a category he would have recognized. However, according to modern conceptions of trauma, the civil wars are the type of event that might cause a cultural trauma, and in their persistent allusions and preoccupation with Rome's discordant foundation, the *Histories* are consistent with other examples of literature borne out of collective trauma. What we *can* say is that, knowingly or not, the allusive *Histories* enact the repetition and return that can lead to the acknowledgment and eventual processing of trauma.

While certainty about a trauma-based reading of the *Histories* is beyond our reach, we are on somewhat firmer ground when we examine Sallust's allusive technique as a historiographical tool. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the *Histories* are "about" the 70s and 60s, but they are also *about* much more than that. Analogical historiography provided a sense of temporal openness and allowed Sallust to work on multiple interpretive levels. This allusive methodology rewarded subtle readers. Sallust's account of the post-Sullan years was good, solid history; even a superficial reader could enjoy Sallust's account of Sertorius' brave stand against Sulla, of Lucullus' desperation in the East, of Spartacus' dramatic charge down the Italian peninsula at the head of a rebel force tens of thousands strong. A somewhat more thoughtful reader might recognize in this account a bitter critique of the post-Sulla years: of the demagogues who freely traded in buzzwords, the disingenuous accusations of partisanship by those who were themselves fomenting civil discord. For those who recognized Sallust's allusive technique, there was a third and far more urgent level on which to read the *Histories*. The work's criticisms were immediately relevant to Sallust's contemporary audience because they so aptly applied to their own political context as well. Just as the characters of the *Histories* so often said one thing and did another, the triumvirate of Octavian, Mark Antony, and Lepidus was systematically dismantling what was left of the republican constitution while loudly proclaiming that the republic had been restored; although they spoke of peace and denounced civil war, the triumvirs were officially persecuting Sextus Pompey and his adherents while quietly preparing for war against one another. The *Histories'* allusive network not only draws attention to these deceptions, but also offers the reader tools with which to try to uncover these pretexts for themselves in real life; if you can see through Sallust's account of the 70s to find the 30s, you can see through the triumvirs' flimsy constructs. Like Thucydides, Sallust may have envisioned his great work as a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεὶ*, but posterity would have to wait. The Republic was in peril *now*, and action was needed.

But what sort of action? Sallust was retired and held no office; he could not oppose the triumvirs in the political sphere, not that doing so would have been effective or wise anyhow. When he first took to writing history, he made the case that he had found another valuable way to serve the republic.¹⁵² However, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, the triumvirs were aggressive propagandists who left little room for competing narratives. Sallust's concern about the triumvirs' simulation and dissimulation was thus not theoretical or abstract, but deeply personal. Autocracy is generally hostile to the practice of history-writing; Sallust's one remaining outlet was under threat. In the next chapter, I discuss a type of analogy that recurs in the *Histories*: Sallust's use of his characters as analogues for the contested figure of the historian.

Notes

- 1 Plut. *Crass.* 11. That the rebel forces split before the final confrontation is also confirmed by the epitome of Livy's Book 97.
- 2 See Chapter Three, Section Four for more detailed discussion of the Spartacus War's place in the *Histories*.
- 3 Syme 1964: 212, n. 149.
- 4 McGushin 1994; Funari 1996; Ramsey 2015 note Syme's reservations while preserving Maurenbrecher's assignment to Spartacus.
- 5 Sallust's frequent model Thucydides cites this as part of history's utility ("... but whoever will want to see clearly the things that have happened and the things that are going to happen again, things that will be either the same or very similar in accordance with human nature, it will be enough for me that they have judged this [work] useful," "Ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὔθις κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον τοιούτων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτὰ ἀρκούντως ἔξει 1.22).
- 6 The contributions to the *Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians* (2009) show the range of modern approaches, including chapters on "Postmodern Historiographical Theory and the Roman Historians," "The Rhetoric of Roman Historiography," and "Intertextuality in Historiography."
- 7 E.g., Sempronius Asellio: "Indeed, to write in whose consulship a war was begun or completed, and who entered the city in a triumph after that, and not to discuss what happened in the war or what the senate decreed or what law was passed meanwhile, nor to review with what purposes these things were done – that is to tell stories to children, not to write histories" (*scribere autem bellum initum quo consule et quo confectum sit, et quis triumphans introierit ex eo, quae<que> in bello gesta sint non praedicare aut interea quid senatus decreverit aut quae lex rogatiove lata sit, neque quibus consiliis ea gesta sint iterare, id fabulas pueris est narrare, non historias scribere*) FRHist 20 Fr. 2.
- 8 Woodman, who has been one of the most prolific and convincing proponents of this viewpoint, was also one of the earliest, writing in 1977: "To the ancients the writing for history was a literary process directly comparable with oratory or poetry ... [the ancient historians] aimed at embellishing and inflating their subject matter, and at surpassing their predecessors in stylistic achievement" (35).
- 9 E.g., Servius ad *Aen.* 1.292: "Nevertheless, the true explanation is this, that Quirinus is

Augustus, and indeed Remus is in place of Agrippa, who married the daughter of Augustus, and had waged wars together with him (*vera tamen hoc habet ratio, Quirinum Augustum esse, Remum vero pro Agrippa positum, qui filiam Augusti duxit uxorem, et cum eo pariter bella tractavit*)."

10 Griffin 1982: 123.

11 Damon 2010.

12 Griffin 1982: 129–130.

13 On the "window reference" type of allusion, see Thomas 1986.

14 Damon 2010: 376.

15 Farrell 2005 makes a case for intertextual references that I think can equally be applied to historical allusions: "My point is that they cannot all be accidental; because even if it is possible that some very close correspondences between two texts arise by accident, the possibility seems vanishingly small that out of ten, twenty, or a hundred such correspondences, all of them came about by chance. By this principle, even if I cannot guarantee you that any given similarity represents an intentional allusion, I believe I can say with confidence that a large number of such occurrences bespeaks an underlying intent" (105).

16 La Penna and Funari 2015: 232, 255–256.

17 Florus 2.11.23.

18 App. *BCiv.* 3.86–94, Cass. Dio 46.43–45.

19 E.g., Morawski 1911: "*Neque id mirum: status enim reipublicae post Sullae obitum conspicuus quadamtenus similis erat earum turbarum, quae post Caesaris interitum civitatem lacerabant*" (135–136). Although here I will focus on triumphal parallels, others have also noted parallels between Sallust's account of Lepidus' uprising and the topic of his first monograph, Catiline's revolt (see, e.g., La Penna 1968: 258–263). If Lepidus' revolt looks forward to both Catiline's rebellion and the events of the 40s, this constellation of intertexts and allusions is even more rich given Cicero's characterization of Antony as a new Catiline.

20 Syme 1964: 219–222 particularly appreciated Sallust's use of this episode as a mirror for contemporary events.

21 Osgood 2006: "Sallust acutely shows how, in a period of dictatorial lawlessness, confiscation, murder, and famine, a people's only chance for freedom may lie in taking up arms with a demagogue little better than the tyrant he opposes" (164).

22 E.g., App. *BCiv.* 5.39 and 42–45.

23 Osgood 2006: 160; see also Chapter Three.

24 Like speeches in ancient historiography in general, the speech of Philippus is probably in large part a Sallustian invention. For a wide spectrum of views on the authenticity of Sallust's speeches, see Büchner 1982: 204–243; McGushin 1992: 14 and 113; Kraus and Woodman 1997: 36–37; Miralles Maldonado 2009: 59–69. Syme 1964: 198; La Penna 1968: 323–332; Morstein-Marx 2004: 31 argues that Sallust's political experience ensured that the speeches were appropriate to and well-informed by actual historical circumstances and composed in a realistic style.

25 One wonders whether the obvious pun gave this connection additional appeal for Sallust.

26 On the themes of Lepidus' speech, see Rosenblitt 2013; Sapere 2014. For recent studies of the *Philippics*, see Manuwald 2007; Stevenson and Wilson 2008.

27 Morawski 1911: 137–138.

- 28 That is, Pompey had not yet served the requisite offices to be granted this command; see Chapter Four for more on the exceptions made for Pompey throughout his career. Cf. Syme 1964: 221.
- 29 We do not possess Philippus' speech in favor of Pompey's command against Sertorius, besides the quippy pun referenced by Cicero (*L. Philippus dixisse dicitur non se illum sua sententia pro consule sed pro consulibus mittere*, "L. Philippus is said to have stated that he was not sending him [sc. Pompey] as a proconsul, but in place of both consuls," *Man.* 62). However, it seems reasonable to guess that he would have used similar rhetoric to that of his speech urging action against Lepidus and to Cicero's rhetoric supporting Octavian against Antony. This is certainly implied by Cicero's favorable references to Philippus in the *Pro Lege Manilia* as well as at *Phil.* 11.18.
- 30 E.g., M. Antonius, the father of the triumvir, "who, as overseer of the sea coasts where there was Roman control, was more of a criminal than the pirates" (*Qui orae maritumae, qua Romanum esset imperium, curator <nocent>ior piratis*) 3.2 R/3.2 M.
- 31 Rosenblitt 2013: 447–448.
- 32 See McGushin 1992: 113 on the programmatic function of Lepidus' speech; cf. Syme 1964: 186; Rosenblitt 2013: 447.
- 33 Syme 1964: "The son was Triumvir; it pleased Sallust's irony to have the father denounce murder and spoliation in crude and vigorous terms – '*humanas hostias vidistis*'" (220)
- 34 *Ad Fam.* 10.27; cf. *Phil.* 13.14–15.
- 35 Syme 1964: "Cicero at last had the chance to let out his long dislike of Lepidus and his pent-up anger – and also, no doubt, to name the parent, in proper detestation... . With Cicero denouncing the public enemy, the confrontation between present and past was now complete" (222).
- 36 See more detailed discussion in Chapter Three.
- 37 *Consultare* appears five times in the monographs and *Histories* (compare with *consulere*, 33 appearances).
- 38 In addition to 4.27 R: In the *Histories*, the inhabitants of Isaura Nova debate how to respond to the Roman attack: *inter quae trepida cunctisque in unum tumultuose consultantibus Servilius futilem deditionem ratus, ni met<u>s urgeret ...*, "In such alarm, while they were all debating together in confusion, Servilius, reckoning that surrender was hopeless to wish for unless fear provoked it ..." (2.74D R/2.87D M); in the preface of the *Catiline*, Sallust describes Rome's noble ancestors: *delecti, quibus corpus annis infirmum, ingenium sapientia validum erat, rei publicae consultabant*, "The chosen ones, to whom the body was weak with age but the spirit was strong in wisdom, deliberated about the republic" (*Cat.* 6.6); Sallust's Caesar advises open-minded deliberation: "*Omnis homines, patres conscripti, qui de rebus dubiis consultant, ab odio, amicitia, ira atque misericordia vacuos esse decet*," "It is fitting, conscript fathers, for all men who deliberate about uncertain matters to be free from hatred, affection, anger, and pity" (*Cat.* 51.1); Sallust's Cato calls upon the senate to act against the conspirators: "*Res autem monet cavere ab illis magis quam quid in illos statuamus consultare*," "The affair warns us, moreover, to guard against them rather than deliberate about what we should decide about them" (*Cat.* 52.3).
- 39 E.g., Eunus and Salvius, leaders of the First and Second Slave Wars, who were depicted by Diodorus as foreign magicians who relied upon trickery and deceit rather than persuasion and reason; see Chapter Three, Section Four for more detailed discussion.
- 40 *Dissidere* = sitting (*sedere*) away from (*dis-*); this usage is probably derived from the practice

of sitting in the *curia* apart from opponents and with one's allies.

- 41 Two examples from Cicero: *sed rursus hoc permagnum rei publicae malum est et quodam modo mihi praeter ceteros non rectum me in tantis rebus a Pompeio dissidere*, “But, again, it is a very great evil toward the republic, and it is not right, perhaps especially in my case more than in others’, that I separate from Pompey in such matters” (*Att.* 7.6.2); *ad arma vocassent, qui ne vestitu quidem defendi rem publicam sissent; a tribuno plebis post interitum dissidissent, qui eandem horam meae pestis et suorum praemiorum esse voluisset*, “They call men to arms who would allow the republic to go undefended, not even by a change of garment; they would have revolted from the tribune of the plebs after my death, those men who wished the hour of my destruction and their reward to be the same” (*Pro Sest.* 44). Cf. *Leg.* 3.35, *Har. Resp.* 54, *Pis.* 81.
- 42 E.g., *Cic. Brut.* 56, *Rep.* 6.1, *Div.* 1.24.
- 43 E.g., *Cat.* 34.2 and 51.32, *Jug.* 37.1.
- 44 In the voice of Antonius, Cicero defends the role of “productive” *sestitutio* (such as the expulsion of the kings and the civil strife that led to the establishment of the tribunate) as critical to the health and dynamism of the state (*De Or.* 2.199).
- 45 *Livy Per.* 95, App. *BCiv.* 1.116, *Florus* 2.8.20, *Oros.* 5.24.
- 46 *BCiv.* 1.117.
- 47 *Livy Per.* 96, App. *BCiv.* 1.117.
- 48 See Chapter Three.
- 49 *de victis Hispanis trophaia in Pyrenaei iugis constituit* (“he set up trophies on the ridges of the Pyrenees for his conquests of the Spanish,” 3.63 R/3.89 M)
- 50 App. *BCiv.* 2.101; see passage and discussion in Chapter Three.
- 51 Hinds 1987: 26.
- 52 See Ahl 1984: especially 185–192 on the use of “figured speech” to avoid ire, as well as Manuwald 2015 on self-censorship (including the use of allusion to make indirect criticism) in Roman drama.
- 53 In fact, there is relatively little evidence for literary censorship *per se* in the republic; the famous accounts of censorship, book-burnings, and persecutions (e.g., Cremutius Cordus, Petronius) belong to the empire (cf. Chrissanthos 2004: 343–345 on *libertas* and free speech in the Roman republic). We have no examples of writers who were condemned by the triumvirs for subversive texts, though it would have been possible to implicate such a writer in the proscription or land confiscations under a different pretext. There was also recent precedent for the mild reception of criticism. Tacitus’ Cremutius Cordus cites both Caesar and Augustus as exemplars of tolerance toward dissent (*Ann.* 4.34.5); this is consistent with Suetonius’ characterization of both (cf. *Caes.* 75 and *Aug.* 55–56). See also Manuwald 2015, who focuses primarily on censorship and self-censorship on the Roman stage and acknowledges the lack of strong evidence for politically motivated censorship, and Cramer 1945; Howley 2017 on book-burning and censorship.
- 54 *parum mihi libero ore locutus videtur*, (“[Sisenna] seems to me to have spoken with insufficient freedom,” *Jug.* 95.2)
- 55 See Rawson 1979; Briscoe 2013 on the date of Sisenna’s *Histories*.
- 56 In the preface of the *Catiline*, Sallust claims that his work is not influenced by political aspirations or fears: *mihi a spe, metu, partibus rei publicae animus liber erat* “My spirit was free from hope, fear, and political partisanship” (*Cat.* 4.2).

- 57 E.g., Woodman 1988: “I argue that style was used by historians to denote the attitude which they adopted toward their material. Sallust, writing recent history in a time of civil war, was unable to adopt the kind of optimistic attitude which Cicero had taken for granted, but instead preferred to be seen as imitating the critical attitude associated with his stylistic model, Thucydides” (x). This is related to, although not exactly the same as, the conception of style as a manifestation of one’s lifestyle or personality (e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 114.1: *talis oratio qualis vita*; see Bramble 1974 for other *loci classici*).
- 58 For general analysis of Sallust’s style, see, for example, von Albrecht 1989: 68–85; Syme 1964: 240–273; Heldmann 1993: 1–14; for specific comparison with Cicero’s style see Woodman 1988: 117–128.
- 59 Von Albrecht 1989: 68.
- 60 Syme 1964: 261.
- 61 Syme 1964: 262.
- 62 For more detailed discussions of Thucydides’ stylistic influence on Sallust, see Perrochat 1947; Scanlon 1980.
- 63 Likewise, Seneca on Sallust: “abbreviated thoughts and words falling away unexpectedly and incomprehensible brevity” *amputatae sententiae et verba ante expectatum cadentia et obscura brevitatis* (*Ep.* 114.17).
- 64 Scanlon 1980: 73–74, 186–188.
- 65 Von Albrecht 1989: 74–75.
- 66 Cf. Latte 1962.
- 67 E.g., *De. Or.* 2.64: “The style and type of the language, moreover, should be broad and drawn out, flowing with a certain steady calm, without the harshness of the court and prickliness of forensic speeches (*verborum autem ratio et genus orationis fusum atque tractum et cum lenitate quadam aequabili profluens, sine hac iudiciali asperitate et sine sententiarum forensium aculeis persequendum est*); “Speeches and exhortations are also included [in historical texts], but in these a certain drawn-out and flowing manner of speech is sought, not this contorted and harsh one (*interponuntur etiam contiones et hortationes, sed in his tracta quaedam et fluens expetitur, non haec contorta et acris oratio*),” *Or.* 66.
- 68 Woodman 1988: 124–128.
- 69 Woodman 1988: 126.
- 70 E.g., De Meo 1970; Woodman 1988: 117–128; Kraus and Woodman 1997: 12.
- 71 Pelling 2010: 107.
- 72 See Chapter One.
- 73 Cf. *Cat.* 38.2, 52.11.
- 74 For example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus interprets “καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντὶλλάξαν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ” as “changing the names as ordinarily applied to acts,” and claims that people simply applied new names to old behaviors (τὰ τε εἰωθότα ὀνόματα ἐπὶ τοῖς πράγμασι λέγεσθαι μετατιθέντες ἄλλως ἥξιον αὐτὰ καλεῖν, *Thuc.* 29). Modern scholars have argued that this represents a misunderstanding of ἀντὶλλάξαν; rather, Thucydides claims that “words *kept* their accustomed ‘evaluation’ (ἀξίωσις), their sense, but that the *reference* of words to acts was consciously reevaluated in order to justify (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ) the behavior of the speaker and to suggest that it was something better than it actually was” (Swain 1993: 36).
- 75 Cf. Batstone 2010: 46–47.

- 76 Heldmann 1993 argues that Sallust's apparently obscure style was calibrated for his intended reader, the *lector eruditus* whose prior knowledge enables them to fill in what is elided by Sallust's *brevitas*. An allusive reading of the *Histories* seems consistent with Heldmann's argument, since the reader must bring a certain amount of contextual awareness to the text to identify and make sense of the allusions.
- 77 *Qui labores, pericula, dubias atque asperas res facile toleraverant, eis otium, divitiae, optanda alias, oneri miseriaeque fuere* ("Those who had tolerated labors, dangers, uncertain and difficult matters easily – to them, leisure and wealth – desirable in other contexts – were a burden and a curse") *Cat.* 10.
- 78 Thanks to the inheritance of Romulus' fratricide; see Chapter Two, Section III ("Allusion, Repetition, and Trauma").
- 79 Cf. Sallust's grim description of post-battle recognitions: "And when they had come out of the camps to look around or to loot, when they turned over the bodies of the enemy, some found a friend, some found a family friend or a relative; indeed, there were those who recognized personal enemies" (*Multi autem, qui e castris visundi aut spoliandi gratia processerant, volentes hostilia cadavera amicum alii pars hospitem aut cognatum reperiebant; fuere item qui inimicos suos cognoscerent, Cat.* 61).
- 80 Caruth 1996: 17–18.
- 81 E.g., Quint 1993; Hardie 1993.
- 82 See, *inter alia*, Hardie 1993 on the imperial epic poets and Joseph 2012 on Tacitus. Although Kraus 1998 does not specifically focus on the repetition of civil war, in her discussion of repetition in Livy she does note that "Livy's early Romans fight the same moral and political battles that engaged late Republican and early Augustan society" (283).
- 83 Quint 1993: 50.
- 84 Quint 1993: 52. Quint further connects these forms of repetition to Freud's theory of the repetition compulsion, as discussed in the final section of this chapter.
- 85 Dio reports that Octavian had originally preferred the title "Romulus," but chose "Augustus" instead when he became alert to the bad optics of naming himself after a king (53.16.7); one imagines he was aware of the echo of fratricide, and thus civil war, as well. As Wiseman 1995 points out, Augustus' association with Quirinus (the deified Romulus) was a safer choice, given that "the story of the apotheosis is necessarily incompatible with that of Romulus the tyrant" (145).
- 86 Bannon 1997: 137–138.
- 87 *Cat.* 10, *Hist.* 1.9–10, 12 R/1.11–12 M.
- 88 Cf. Posidonius, Diodorus Siculus; see Mehl 2011: 91–93 on historians' attempts to pinpoint moral "turning-points" in Roman history.
- 89 *Epod.* 7.17–20.
- 90 Much of the work in this field has been advanced by cultural sociologists; the 2004 publication of Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser, and Sztompka's *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* seems to have been a watershed moment. In this volume's introductory chapter, Alexander establishes a working definition and theory of collective trauma that has been broadly accepted. One element that has met with resistance is his explicit assertion that the principles of individual trauma cannot be "scaled up" to apply to collective culture; as I discuss later in this section, I follow scholars like Assmann and Caruth in remaining open to this application.
- 91 Eckert 2014: 264; cf. Alexander 2004: "For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity,

social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity" (10). See also Sztompka 2004, especially 160: "Truly *collective* traumas, as distinct from massive traumas, appear only when people start to be aware of the common plight, perceive the similarity of their situation with that of others, define it as shared."

92 Alexander 2004: 1.

93 The term originates with Weber 1968: 468–517.

94 Alexander 2004: 10–24.

95 Alexander 2004: 11.

96 Eckert 2014: 12.

97 Assmann 1997: 23–54 and 216ff.

98 Assmann: 1997: 216.

99 In a recent example, this phenomenon was widespread in the United States following the 9/11/2001 attacks, as a virulent anti-Muslim sentiment and zealous American patriotism simultaneously emerged.

100 Alexander 2004: 22–24.

101 I mean "Romans" in the broadest possible sense here (that is, anyone who would have described themselves as such). As has been noted, the nature of the Roman civil wars was such that they left essentially no one in their path unharmed. Citizen and non-citizen, urban dwellers of Rome and Italians from beyond the city, elite and non-elite were all impacted by the wars' wide-ranging effects.

102 Eckert 2014: 267.

103 Eckert 2014: 270.

104 Val. Max. 9.2.1.

105 Freud 2015: 8–9.

106 Freud 2015: 9–11.

107 Freud 2015: "He is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past... . He [the physician] must get him to re-experience some portion of his forgotten life, but must see to it, on the other hand, that the patient retains some degree of aloofness, which will enable him, in spite of everything, to recognize that what appears to be reality is in fact only a reflection of a forgotten past" (12–13).

108 In this respect, I aim to follow the model of Quint 1993.

109 Alexander 2004: 5–8.

110 E.g., Assmann 1997: "The distinction between conscious memory and repressed memory appears on the plane of collective psychology as the distinction between tradition and memory" (161).

111 Caruth 1996: "Repetition, in other words, is not simply the attempt to grasp that one has almost died but, more fundamentally and enigmatically, the very attempt *to claim one's own survival*. If history is to be understood as the history of a trauma, it is a history that is experienced as the endless attempt to assume one's survival as one's own" (64).

112 Freud 1970.

113 Assmann 1997: 160.

- 114 Caruth 1996: 18.
- 115 Rome's "péché originel" (Jal 1963: 407).
- 116 Bannon 1997: 159. Its earliest appearance in extant Latin literature is in Ennius' *Annales* (1.72–91/42–50 Skutsch) and it may well go back further; see Wiseman 1995, especially 43–76, for the origins of the Remus myth in general and 141–44 for the fratricidal account in particular.
- 117 "As the civil wars ran their course, fratricide came to mean *the* fratricide, Romulus' murder of his brother Remus at the moment when Rome was founded" (Bannon 1997: 137). See also Wiseman 1995: 15–16; Evans 1992: 89–91.
- 118 Bannon 1997: 174–188.
- 119 Bannon 1997: 162.
- 120 *Rep.* 1.41.64.
- 121 Bannon 1997: 163–164.
- 122 Horace seems to soften his stance toward Romulus later in his career (e.g., *Carm.* 1.12.33 and 2.15.10).
- 123 On the date of *Epode* 7, see Watson 2003: 269–271; Jal 1963 places it "sans doute en 38."
- 124 Gurval 1995: 149; Bannon 1997: 164.
- 125 E.g., *Epod.* 16.1–12: "Already another generation is worn down by civil wars, and Rome herself collapses under her own strength (*Altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas/ suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit*).” See Chapter Four for more discussion of Horace's conception of civil war and possible echoes of Sallust's *Histories* in the *Epodes*.
- 126 Romulus is also named in the spurious *Invective Against Cicero*, in which the speaker sarcastically refers to Cicero as "Romulus of Arpinum" (*Romule Arpinas, In Ciceronem* 7). In this context, the association with civil war does not seem to be emphasized; the target, rather is Cicero's self-fashioning as the savior of the republic. On the attribution of the *Invective*, see Novokhatko 2009. Cf. Catullus 29, in which the poet addresses the target of his invective (probably either Caesar or Pompey) as *cinaede Romule*; in this case, again, the association with civil war does not seem to be the point.
- 127 *Cat.* 6.
- 128 *Cat.* 10–13; *Jug.* 40–42; 1.9–12 R/1.11–12 M. See Wiseman 2010 for discussion of these passages and comparison with contemporary authors.
- 129 See Reggiani 1994; Funari 1996; La Penna and Funari 2015 on textual issues in this passage, particularly the variant reading *saevus* for *scaevos*.
- 130 Gisborne 2005 argues that Sulla used coinage, his building program, and the general trappings of royalty (e.g., twenty-four lictors instead of the customary twelve) to cultivate an association with Rome's kings, particularly Romulus; see also Reggiani 1994.
- 131 On textual problems/various attributions of this fragment, see Funari 1996; La Penna and Funari 2015.
- 132 Without context, it is impossible to say whether *nobis* here refers specifically to the Romans or to humanity in general, but if editors are correct in assigning this fragment to the archaeology, it seems fair to imagine that it is part of Sallust's account of the Romans' decline and refers to their particular qualities.
- 133 McGushin 1992: 75; La Penna and Funari 2015: 129.
- 134 E.g., Bickerman 1946: 131–132; Büchner 1982: 229; Raditsa 1969: 6; Ahlheid 1988: 67–68;

- McGushin 1994: 174. At least one ancient source would agree; Fronto cites the letter of Mithridates alongside that of Pompey and Thucydides' Letter of Nicias as examples of the historians' free embellishment (*Ad Verum* 2.1.15). At the other end of the spectrum: arguing for the letter's authenticity as a historical document, Stier 1969: 447 goes so far as to suggest that Sallust's version is based on a specific archival document. McGing 1986: 154–161 suggests that Sallust composed the letter in careful imitation of genuine Pontic propaganda, giving perhaps too much weight to Sallust's desire for accurate imitation at the expense of other historiographic goals.
- 135 Adler 2011: 28–31 gives an overview of the letter's echoes of Sallust's views as presented elsewhere in the corpus, with examples from both monographs.
- 136 *Convenas* here most probably refers to Romulus and his followers rather than Aeneas and the Trojans; see Raditsa 1969: 245 and 251.
- 137 Bikerman 1946: 143; cf. Ahlheid 1988: 79; McGushin 1994: 197.
- 138 For general discussion of Macer's speech, see Büchner 1982: 221–229; Latta 1999; Rosenblitt 2016.
- 139 Cf. Syme 1964: "Nor is Licinius Macer's intervention the cause or consequence of any important transaction" (200).
- 140 McGushin 1994: "[T]he rights of the plebs had been seriously impaired by the *Lex Cornelia de tribunicia potestate*, and the issue of the restoration of the powers of the tribunes, the defenders of the people's freedom, figured in urban politics practically every year from 76 to 70, the year in which the consuls Pompeius and Crassus passed a law restoring the legislative powers of the tribunate" (86).
- 141 Most famously, Caesar and Cato's speeches in the *Catiline* (*Cat.* 51–52); see, e.g., Sklenár 1998 on their function as a pair. The speeches of Lepidus and Philippus in Book One seem to work as a pair, as well. Although the fragmentary state of the *Histories* means we cannot say with certainty how closely they would have appeared in the narrative, the content and themes of the speeches are clearly in conversation.
- 142 Syme 1964: 200; Cf. La Penna 1963: 241; Pasoli 1976: 108–109; Latta 1999: 226–268 and 235–239.
- 143 It may not have hurt that Macer's skill as a historian was disdained by Cicero, whose historiographical aesthetic Sallust rejected: *nam quid Macrum numerem? cuius loquacitas habet aliquid argutiarum, nec id tamen ex illa erudita Graecorum copia, sed ex librariolis Latinis, in orationibus autem multas ineptias, elatio summam impudentiam* ("And why should I mention Macer? His chatty style has a bit of cleverness, although this comes not from the rich learning of the Greeks, but from the Latin copyists. Moreover, his speeches have many infelicities, and exaggeration to shameless degree," Cicero, *Leg.* 1.7). Macer ran more dangerously afoul of Cicero in 66 when he was prosecuted by the latter for bribery and extortion; astonished by his conviction, he died suddenly, perhaps by suicide (Val. Max. 9.12.7).
- 144 Walt 1997 includes 29; Oakley 2013 counts 33.
- 145 Wiseman 1995: 11; Oakley 2013: 421; Walt 1997: 175 goes so far as to claim that Macer's version exonerates Romulus entirely, but this seems unlikely in light of Hodgkinson's convincing suggestions about Malalas' dependence on Macer.
- 146 Livy 1.7.1–2, DH 1.87.1–4. Wiseman 1995: "[Macer's version] is followed by Livy and Dionysius, both of whom comment on the episode as an example of tragic discord resulting from the pursuit of power. It is very likely that Macer spelt out that lesson too" (143). Cf.

- Oakley 2013: 421.
- 147 Hodgkinson 1997.
- 148 Hodgkinson 1997: 86.
- 149 Hodgkinson 1997: 90; the author usefully summarizes his case on 92.
- 150 Wiseman 1995: 143–144.
- 151 Wiseman 1995: 144.
- 152 *Cat.* 3.1; cf. *Jug.* 4.1–2.

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3 Historians in the *Histories*

The *Histories* are populated by a diverse cast of characters. By its nature, the large-scale format of the work provided more opportunity than the monographs did to develop several “main” characters in different theaters of operation. Sallust exploits this opportunity and builds a community of complex figures who not only enact the events of the narrative, but also participate in Sallust’s historiographical commentary. As was outlined in the previous chapter, the *Histories* employ indirect methods of meta-historical reflection. In place of explicit declarations, Sallust uses the entire narrative of the *Histories* as a venue for reflection on historiography’s new role and purpose under the triumvirs, and how the task of writing history must be adapted to fit the turbulent context of his own day. More specifically, in this chapter I will demonstrate that he uses characters as analogues for the figure of the historian in order to explore his anxieties about the continuing relevance of historiography. Sallust depicts some characters shaping their own “histories” and dismissing the need for historians to commemorate their deeds; others require the historian’s intervention to record their acts and rescue them from obscurity. Through these characters, Sallust problematizes the role of the historian as the protector of *memoria rerum gestarum*.

I Who can write history?

Great Men had tried to control their own narratives at least since Alexander hired Callisthenes as his personal historian, but it was only recently that with his lengthy autobiography and carefully cultivated iconographic program Sulla had refined and intensified the practice.¹ This section briefly outlines the methods of self-fashioning employed by the triumvirs, who tried to control how historians would interpret their reign.² I focus here on Octavian due to the relative abundance of evidence for his propaganda, but this is not to suggest that Mark Antony and Lepidus were not equally concerned with self-

promotion and attacking the images of their rivals.³ For example, Antony showed a keen interest in defining his own public image, and his coinage emphasized his familial connection to Hercules (e.g., *RRC* 494.2a-b) and his self-identification as the “New Dionysus” (*RPC* 1.2201–02).⁴ Although the precise source is unknown, it would not be unreasonable to think that Antonian propaganda lay behind rumors that Octavian had committed human sacrifice in the aftermath of the Perusine War.⁵ Octavian’s self-fashioning, however, left behind the most durable and comprehensive legacy, and so I focus on it here.

Anyone who has read the *Res Gestae* is familiar with the rhetorical tricks of Augustus’ revisionist history. Perhaps fortunately for Sallust, Augustus outlived him by forty years, and the historian never had to bear witness to the princeps’ “lifetime achievement” inscription. Without a secure date for Sallust’s death we also cannot know if he was aware of the purge of documents after Naulochus, when Octavian ordered the burning of “writings which were evidence of the civil strife.”⁶ Nevertheless, Sallust had ample evidence of Octavian’s eagerness and ability to control his public image and “write” his own history. In particular, one of Octavian’s greatest public relations challenges at the time of the *Histories*’ composition was the need to make what were, in reality, civil conflicts look like battles against foreign enemies. Caesar himself had only learned through difficult experience that Romans did not want to be reminded of the pain of civil war:

τὰ δὲ Ῥωμαίων φυλαζόμενος ἄρα, ὥς ἐμφύλια οὐκ εἰκότα τε αὐτῷ καὶ Ῥωμαίοις αἰσχρὰ καὶ ἀπαίσια, ἐπιγράψαι θριάμβῳ, παρήνεγκεν ὁμῶς αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖσδε τὰ παθήματα ἅπαντα καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐν εἰκόσι καὶ ποικίλαις γραφαῖς, χωρὶς γε Πομπηίου· τοῦτον γὰρ δὴ μόνον ἐφυλάξατο δεῖξαι, σφόδρα ἔτι πρὸς πάντων ἐπιποθοῦμενον. ὁ δὲ δῆμος ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς οἰκείοις κακοῖς, καίπερ δεδιώς, ἔστενε, καὶ μάλιστα, ὅτε ἴδοι Λεύκιόν τε Σκιπίωνα τὸν αὐτοκράτορα πλησσομένον ἐς τὰ στέρνα ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ μεθίμενον ἐς τὸ πέλαγος, ἢ Πετρήιον ἐπὶ διαίτη διαχρόμενον ἑαυτόν, ἢ Κάτωνα ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ διασπώμενον ὥς θηρίον

(App. *BCiv.* 2.101)

He took care not to inscribe the names of any Romans in his triumph, since it was unseemly in his opinion and shameful and inauspicious in the opinion of the Romans, but nevertheless he depicted all their sufferings and the men themselves in images and various pictures, except Pompey; for he took care not to show him alone, since he was still longed for by everyone. The people, although frightened, wept over the familiar misfortunes, especially when they saw the general Lucius Scipio struck in the chest by his own hand and throwing himself into the sea, or Petreius killing himself at the feast, or Cato torn apart by himself like a beast.

Although Caesar exercised restraint by not displaying Pompey’s image at his triumph, he seems to have miscalculated the Roman people’s tolerance for

images of fellow citizens who died in the civil war.

After so many years of civil strife (with no obvious end in sight), war against non-Romans was far more palatable than civil war. Recognizing this, Octavian used edicts, inscriptions, coinage, memoirs, pamphlets, even invective poetry to reframe his civil wars as other types of conflicts.⁷ Octavian/Augustus would arguably perfect this art of whitewashing after Sallust's death, when he used similar methods to de-emphasize Mark Antony's *Romanitas* and reframe a war fought against him as a war against Cleopatra and the luxurious East.⁸ However, by the time Sallust was writing the *Histories*, Octavian had successfully reframed two Roman wars – the Perusine War and the war against Sextus Pompey – as other, more sympathetic types of conflicts. His efforts were particularly effective because they were calculated to exploit contemporary anxieties and rhetoric.

The Perusine War was an uprising of dispossessed Italian landowners in the wake of Philippi (41–40 BCE). The conflict was the product of a collaboration between Mark Antony's wife Fulvia and his brother Lucius (consul of 41 BCE). Fulvia and Lucius raised an army and at one point even marched on Rome. The violence came to a head when Octavian besieged them in the Umbrian town of Perugia. Octavian framed the Perusine War as a conflict against the scheming and ambitious Fulvia – a woman, not a “real Roman.”⁹ Martial purports to quote one of Octavian's insulting verses about Fulvia:

Quod futuit Glaphyran Antonius, hanc mihi poenam
Fulvia constituit, se quoque uti futuam.
Fulviam ego ut futuam? Quid si me Manius oret
pedicem, faciam? Non puto, si sapiam.
“Aut futue, aut pugnemus” ait. Quid, quod mihi vita
carior est ipsa mentula? Signa canant! (Mart. 11.20.3–8)

Because Antonius screws Glaphura, Fulvia has decided that this is my punishment, that I should fuck her [Fulvia] too. That I should fuck Fulvia? What if Manius were to ask that I fuck him? Should I do it? I think not, if I have any sense. ‘Either fuck me,’ she says, ‘or let us fight.’ What to do, since my dick is more dear to me than life? Sound the signal for battle!

Octavian here capitalizes on contemporary anxieties about the threat of excessively powerful women.¹⁰ By focusing on Fulvia as the opposing commander, he justifies his campaign against Roman citizens as the only way to relegate an overreaching woman to her proper place and thus restore order and harmony. Octavian reinforced this message through edicts, which reminded Romans that the true enemy was not an army of fellow citizens, but a conniving and transgressive woman.¹¹ This characterization was echoed by Octavian's troops, who made Fulvia the target of menacing and insulting inscriptions on sling bullets.¹² By thus shifting focus to Fulvia, Octavian

attempted to mitigate the appearance of violence against the Italians who had suffered through the civil wars and the land confiscations.

Sextus Pompey was also a target of Octavian's propaganda. Just a decade after the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, Octavian knew that the conflict between himself – Caesar's adopted son – and Sextus – Pompey's son – would feel like a continuation of the earlier civil war. To reframe the war with Sextus, Octavian depicted Sextus and his adherents as pirates and slaves. The charge was made plausible by Sextus' naval strength and control of important waterways. Furthermore, he was said to count among his supporters many runaway slaves, criminals, and others from the margins of society.¹³ Octavian was thus able to obscure his opponent's Roman identity and to legitimize the conflict as the necessary suppression of piracy. There was also useful irony in the fact that the elder Pompey had once been granted unprecedented *imperium* for the purpose of clearing the Mediterranean of pirates and had done so with stunning efficiency. Characterizing Sextus as a pirate allowed Octavian to challenge his claims of filial *pietas*, a key aspect of Sextus' own propaganda, and to position himself as the successor to the elder Pompey's legacy.¹⁴

In the examples of the Perusine War and the war against Sextus, Octavian thus took over the role of the historian, "writing" the story of the conflicts as wars against non-citizens or non-Romans, rather than as civil wars; he used non-historiographical media like epigrams and pamphlets to preemptively perform the historian's job. Leading figures had always taken various measures to shape their public images,¹⁵ but Octavian's program was aggressive and, more importantly, self-authored. Alexander had employed a personal historian in Callisthenes. Sulla and Julius Caesar wrote *commentarii*, raw material for "real" historians, but did not write or commission their own full-scale histories.¹⁶ Unlike Sulla and Caesar, Octavian did not create the illusion that he needed or desired a historian's aid.¹⁷ He published his speeches in pamphlet form (App. *BCiv.* 5.130), later wrote a thirteen-book memoir,¹⁸ and late in life reinforced his version of his own legacy with the *Res Gestae*. His efforts were profoundly successful. His depiction of Sextus Pompey as a pirate, for example, was so effective that in the *Res Gestae*, Augustus did not even need to refer to him by name and could simply claim to have "freed the sea of pirates" (*mare pacavi a praedonibus*). Sextus soon became a mere caricature,¹⁹ and has only recently been rehabilitated by scholars.²⁰ Our two main ancient accounts of the Perusine War, the narratives of Appian and Dio, are hostile toward Fulvia and show the influence of Octavian's autobiography (now lost).²¹ Without actually writing history, Octavian had written history. Sallust's Sertorius would attempt to do the same.

II Sertorius: tension

Sertorius and the war in Spain seem to have comprised a significant part of the *Histories*. Quintus Sertorius, an *eques* from an otherwise undistinguished Sabine family from Nursia, was a colleague of Marius and Cinna and opponent of Sulla during the conflicts of the early to mid-80s BCE. After the deaths of Marius and Cinna, he took the governorship of Spain in 82 with the backing of the remaining Marian supporters in Rome. When he was proscribed by Sulla in 81, Sertorius briefly fled to Mauretania. He then returned to Spain where, supported by a mixed force of Roman and Spanish troops, he fended off Roman forces until his assassination at the hands of his lieutenant Marcus Perpenna Vento in 72.²²

Fragment 1.76 R is the longest remnant of Sallust's character portrait of Sertorius.²³ Sallust reflects here on Sertorius' service in the Social War, and notes the failure of previous writers to record his early deeds:

Magna gloria tribunus militum in Hispania T. Didio imperante, magno usui bello Marsico paratu militum et armorum fuit, multaque tum ductu eius <manu>que patrata primo per ignobilitatem, deinde per invidiam scriptorum <in>celebrata sunt, quae vivos facie sua ostentabat aliquot advorsis cicatricibus et effosso oculo. Quin ille dehonestamento corporis maxume laetabatur neque illis anxius, quia relicua gloriosius retinebat.

(1.76 R/1.88 M)

As a military tribune, he achieved great glory in Spain under the command of Titus Didius and was of great use in the Marsic War in the assembly of soldiers and arms, and many things that were done at that time under his leadership and by his hand are unrecorded, first because of his ignoble background, then through the ill-will of writers; deeds which, while he was alive, he used to show off with his appearance, with a number of scars on the front of his body and a hollow eye-socket. Rather, he rejoiced most greatly in the disfigurement of his body, and was not troubled by those things, because he preserved the rest with greater glory.²⁴

Like Sallust's other character portraits, the description of Sertorius in Fragment 1.76 not only introduces an important figure to the narrative, but also highlights central themes of the work.²⁵ Fr. 1.76 should be read as not only a biographical sketch of Sertorius, but also a meta-literary reflection on Sallust's role and purpose as a historian. Sallust alerts the reader that Sertorius' character portrait has programmatic relevance by alluding to another famous programmatic passage from the *Catiline*. In Fr. 1.76, Sallust claims that Sertorius' early deeds remained obscure because of *invidia scriptorum*. This echoes the charge in the opening of the *Catiline* that *invidia* is one of the factors which makes history-writing a difficult task. According to Sallust, if an author describes the faults of an actor in his narrative, he puts himself at risk of being accused of malevolence:

Ac mihi quidem, tametsi haudquaquam par gloria sequitur scriptorem et auctorem rerum, tamen in primis arduum videtur res gestas scribere; primum quod facta dictis exaequanda sunt, dehinc quia plerique quae delicta reprehenderis malivolentia et invidia dicta putant

(*Cat.* 3.2)

But indeed, although not at all equal glory follows the recorder and the performer of deeds, it nevertheless seems to me that writing history is extremely difficult; first, because the things that were done have to be equaled by the narration, and second, because many assume that the faults you criticize are mentioned out of malevolence or ill-will.

Sallust's repetition of *invidia* in his criticism of the authors who let the deeds of Sertorius remain *incelebrata* refers the reader back to this passage. It may seem ironic at first that Sallust faults these *scriptores* on one of the counts about which he had expressed anxiety in the *Catiline*, but the charge is not precisely the same. In the *Catiline*, Sallust cautioned that a historian's critical approach might be met with skepticism because others will assume the criticisms are rooted in envy (*invidia*). However, the writers accused of *invidia* in Fr. 1.76 have not bothered to criticize Sertorius but seem to have left his deeds unrecorded (*incelebrata*).

The *invidia* of earlier authors thus threatens to relegate Sertorius to obscurity. In Sallust's formulation in the *Catiline*, this is the power of historiography: the fame or obscurity of all things is entirely dependent on those recording them.²⁶

Sed profecto fortuna in omni re dominatur; ea res cunctas ex lubidine magis quam ex vero celebrat obscuratque. Atheniensium res gestae, sicut ego aestumo, satis amplae magnificaeque fuere, verum aliquanto minores tamen quam fama feruntur. Sed quia provenire ibi scriptorum magna ingenia, per terrarum orbem Atheniensium facta pro maxumis celebrantur. Ita eorum qui [ea] fecere virtus tanta habetur quantum eam verbis potuere extollere praeclara ingenia

(*Cat.* 8)

But, indeed, fortune dominates in every matter; it celebrates and obscures all things out of caprice rather than truth. The affairs of the Athenians, as I see it, were great and splendid enough, but nevertheless somewhat lesser in reality than they are declared by their reputation. But because great talents of writers were produced there, the deeds of the Athenians are celebrated throughout the world as the very greatest. Thus, the virtue of those who acted is considered great to the extent that distinguished talents were able to exalt it.

The most noble deeds are forgotten or rendered meaningless unless they are memorialized, and *invidia scriptorum* has the potential to abolish the memory of entire events and people. In Fr. 1.76, Sallust suggests that his account of Sertorius will prevent Sertorius' acts from remaining *incelebrata*. Although it falls outside the chronological scope of the main body of the *Histories*, Sallust

seems to have gone out of his narrative way to discuss events of Sertorius' earlier career which were previously neglected by writers.²⁷ Sallust's extensive account of the war in Spain will assure that those events will be remembered. Moreover, just as the great Athenian historians were able to elevate the deeds of the Athenians to something perhaps greater than they were in reality, Sallust's excellence had the potential to amplify Sertorius' legacy. However, as we shall see, closer consideration of Fr. 1.76 reveals that Sallust's Sertorius is not dependent on Sallust's written history to create his legacy. Sertorius is able to "write" a history through other means, and this has serious implications for the historian's utility.

In Fr. 1.76, Sallust depicts Sertorius making a boastful display of his war wounds. If, as we might reasonably believe, Plutarch's *Life of Sertorius* drew heavily from the *Histories*,²⁸ we might presume from Plutarch's account that this was an act of self-fashioning through which Sertorius created a narrative about his own bravery:

Οὐ μὴν ὑφῆκατο τῆς στρατιωτικῆς τόλμης εἰς ἀξίωμα προεληλυθὼς ἡγεμόνος, ἀλλὰ καὶ χειρὸς ἐπιδεικνύμενος ἔργα θαυμαστὰ καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῖς ἀγῶσιν ἀφειδῶς ἐπιδιδούς, τῶν ὤψεων ἀπέβαλε τὴν ἐτέραν ἐκοπεῖσαν. ἐπὶ τούτῳ δὲ καὶ καλλωπιζόμενος αἰεὶ διετέλει. Τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ἄλλους οὐκ αἰεὶ τὰ μαρτύρια τῶν ἀριστείων περιφέρειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀποτίθεσθαι στρεπτὰ καὶ δόρατα καὶ στεφάνους, αὐτῷ δὲ τῆς ἀνδραγαθίας παραμένειν τὰ γνωρίσματα, τοὺς αὐτοὺς ἔχοντι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἅμα καὶ τῆς συμφορᾶς θεατὰς.

(Sert. 4.2)

He did not refrain from soldierly daring even when he had advanced to the rank of a commander, but rather displayed marvelous actions and unsparingly threw his person into battle, with the result that he lost one of his eyes (which had been knocked out). And indeed he always continued to make a proud display of himself in this way; for he said that others did not always carry around the proofs of their noble deeds, but they set aside their necklaces, spears, and wreaths; but the tokens of courage remained with him, and he had the same witnesses of both his virtue and misfortune.

Thus, in Plutarch's version (which presumably reflects the now-missing passage that would have followed 1.76), Sertorius is shown using his war wounds to tell the story of his accomplishments. Unlike others, who rely on external markers (στρεπτὰ καὶ δόρατα καὶ στεφάνους), Sertorius' evidence of valor (τῆς ἀνδραγαθίας ... τὰ γνωρίσματα) is part of himself, "written" on his body; as long as he is alive (*vivos*, 1.76 R), he can use this proof to shape his own self-narrative.

History-writing, too, is an external form of commemoration. On its own, this display of battle wounds does not necessarily have overtly historiographical relevance. Using scars to boast of one's achievements was a familiar tradition by Sertorius' day, and a historiographical and rhetorical trope which persisted into the imperial period.²⁹ However, its juxtaposition

with the programmatic phrase *invidia scriptorum* in Fr. 1.76 brings Sertorius into the sphere of the writer. Scholars have noted that Sallust's Sertorius is, like Marius, associated with an anti-aristocratic tradition, and have argued that Sallust's remark about *invidia scriptorum* in Fr. 1.76 is a critique of the elite bias of previous historians.³⁰ This reading is persuasive, but not exclusive of others. In particular, I suggest that the historiographical relevance of this passage goes further than this, and that Sertorius in fact presents a challenge to *all* history-writing, not just the aristocratic tradition. Sertorius was neglected by authors before Sallust, but his scars provided him with a medium for self-presentation and the creation of his own *memoria*. Sertorius does not require a historian to record his deeds, because the scars and empty eye-socket left behind by his exploits take the place of the written word. Unlike, for example, Cicero, he does not need to ask the help of a Luceius to ensure his exploits will not be forgotten. He attempts to seize the historian's task for himself and overcome *invidia scriptorum* without a *scriptor* of his own.

The context in which 1.76 R has been preserved further suggests the plausibility of a literary or historiographical reading of the passage. Aulus Gellius describes the comparison drawn by one Titus Castricius between Sertorius and Philip of Macedon, who had also sustained multiple war injuries. As a comparandum to Fr. 1.76, Gellius cites Demosthenes' description of Philip's wounds and the pride he took in them:

Ἐώραν δ' αὐτὸν τὸν Φίλιππον, πρὸς ὃν ἦν ὁ ἀγών, ὑπὲρ ἀρχῆς καὶ δυναστείας τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἐκκεκομμένον, τὴν κλεῖν κατεαγότα, τὴν χεῖρα, τὸ σκέλος πεπρωμένον, πᾶν ὅτι βουλευθεῖν μέρος ἢ τύχη τοῦ σώματος παρελῆσθαι, τοῦτο προιέμενον, ὥστε τῷ λοιπῷ μετὰ τιμῆς καὶ δόξης ζῆν

(*De Cor.* 67)

I saw that Philip himself, against whom we are in conflict for the sake of command and power, having had an eye knocked out, having broken his collarbone, and having been maimed in his hand and his leg, would offer up every part of his body which chance wished to take, so that he might live in the future with honor and good reputation.

According to Gellius, Sallust sought to rival this description of Philip with his characterization of Sertorius in Fr. 1.76 (*haec aemulari volens Sallustius de Sertorio duce in Historiis ita scripsit*, 2.27.2). Gellius reports that the rhetorician Titus Castricius noted an important distinction between these two passages of Demosthenes and Sallust. Philip matter-of-factly accepts his injuries as the price of the pursuit of honor and glory; he is not ashamed of his wounded body because it arrived at that condition in the pursuit of worthy ends (τίμη and δόξα). Sertorius, on the other hand, is shown to be actually *rejoicing* in his bodily disfigurement (*laetabatur*). Titus characterizes Philip's reaction as appropriate and praise-worthy, but Sertorius' as inappropriate and even

transgressive:

“Quibus verbis,” inquit, “ostenditur Philippus, non, ut Sertorius, corporis dehonestamento laetus, quod est,” inquit, “insolens et immodicum, sed prae studio laudis et honoris iacturarum damnorumque corporis contemptor, qui singulos artus suos fortunae prodigendos daret quaestu atque compendio gloriarum ...” De utriusque his verbis T. Castricius cum iudicaret, “Nonne,” inquit, “ultra naturae humanae modum est, dehonestamento corporis laetari? Si quidem laetitia dicitur exultatio quaedam animi gaudio efferventior eventu rerum expetitarum.”

(*Attic Nights* 2.27.3–5)

In his estimate of these words of the two writers Titus Castricius said: “Is it not beyond the range of human capability to rejoice in bodily disfigurement? For rejoicing is a certain exaltation of spirit, delighting in the realization of something greatly desired. How much truer, more natural, and more in accordance with human limitations is this: ‘Giving up whatever part of his body fortune chose to take’”. ... “In these words,” said he, “Philip is shown, not like Sertorius, rejoicing in bodily disfigurement, which,” he said, “is unheard of and extravagant, but as a scorner of bodily losses and injuries in his thirst for honour and glory, who in exchange for the fame which he coveted would sacrifice his limbs one by one to the attacks of fortune.”³¹

In Titus Castricius’ estimation, Sallust has depicted Sertorius indulging in excessive and improper joy. It is one thing to accept one’s scars as the price of victory and even to feel pride in them, but to be delighted to use them as a tool for self-promotion (or “writing history”) is another matter entirely. Titus is nominally criticizing Sallust, not Sertorius (*de utriusque his verbis*, 2.27.3) and finds Demonsthenes’s portrait of Philip more “sincere, true, and in accordance with human nature” (*illud sincerius veriusque et humanis magis condicionibus conveniens*, 2.27.4). However, his critique also reads as a rhetorical or even literary evaluation of Sertorius’ self-fashioning, which suggests that something about Sallust’s account (either what we have in 1.76 or original passages available to Gellius and Titus but not to us) encouraged him to think of Sertorius in this way.

In any event, what Titus perceived as a mis-step in Sallust’s characterization was not an error at all, but rather an expression of the historian’s own unease with Sertorius’ use of his wounds as a medium for “writing” history. In light of Sallust’s apparent sympathy for the overlooked *ignobiles* of Roman history, we might expect his approval of Sertorius’ historiographical independence. However, Sallust’s language in Fr. 1.76 suggests his discomfort with Sertorius’ method. In particular, *laetari* and its derivatives often carry a sinister connotation in the Sallustian corpus, and denote an immoderate, transgressive, or otherwise inappropriate joy. For example, in Caesar’s speech in the *Catiline*, Caesar uses *laetari* to describe the cruel rejoicing of the Athenians when the Thirty enacted a series of executions without trials.³² *Laetari* is used in one

case in the *Jugurtha* to describe barbarians passing the night in wild exultation.³³ In another example from the same work, the Vaccians are said to have “rejoiced (*laetati*)” in their ambush and slaughter of Roman soldiers, who had been welcomed under the pretext of a religious festival.³⁴ In light of these examples, Sallust seems to use *laetari* to indicate that the pleasure Sertorius took in using his wounds to play the historian was inappropriate and even alarming. Sallust’s concern might have arisen from Sertorius’ similarity to contemporary figures who made aggressive and forceful efforts to control their public images and, in effect, to “write” their own histories.

Through the figure of Sertorius, Sallust thus demonstrates his anxiety about the continued relevance of historiography under a regime which so carefully constructed and manipulated its own history. However, that concern is complicated by the fact that Sertorius’ medium – his body – is itself impermanent. Unless his self-presentation was translated into some more durable form, it would have died with him. Sallust had suggested in the *Catiline* that the power of historiography lies in the fact that the fame or obscurity of all things are entirely dependent on both the skill and interest of those recording them (*Cat.* 8). The most noble deeds are forgotten or rendered meaningless unless they are memorialized, and *invidia scriptorum* has the potential to abolish the memory of entire events and people. Sertorius challenges this formulation by attempting to wrest authorship out of the hands of historians.

Yet, Sertorius’ medium – his body – is impermanent. As Sallust reminds us, this type of “historiography” is only guaranteed while its author is living (... quae vivos facie sua ostentabat); it may not survive without Sallust’s intervention. Like the triumvirs, the ambition of Sallust’s Sertorius is to render the historian obsolete, but he has not quite achieved this; Sallust’s very recording of this fact in a history demonstrates the flaw in Sertorius’ strategy. Like another figure we will meet shortly, Spartacus, Sertorius still *needs* a historian even if he is not actually in search of one. However, Sallust’s Pompey presents a more direct challenge to the historian’s role.

III Pompey: a challenge

With his aggressive *ambitio* and shameless duplicity, the young Pompey seems to have had a central role in the *Histories*.³⁵ Sallust’s animosity toward Pompey is one of few aspects of the *Histories* on which scholars are in general agreement.³⁶ Syme argued that Sallust’s critique of Pompey was at the heart of the text:

Sallust’s theme is not merely the attack on the post-Sullan system. It is the whole interval

of precarious peace between the two ages of civil war... . Or better, the decline and fall of the Republic, with Pompeius Magnus the principal agent, one of Sulla's men to begin with, then through long years the enemy of the oligarchs, to become at the end their false friend, and calamitous, bringing them to ruin, their delusion matched with his own jealous ambition.³⁷

It is clear from the fragments describing Pompey that he embodied some of Sallust's most grave concerns. Fragments 2.17 and 2.18 R, from a (probable) character portrait of Pompey upon his entry into the Sertorian War, depict a figure characterized by the ambition and duplicity Sallust had identified in characters like Catiline.³⁸

oris probi, animo inverecundo

(2.17 R/2.16 M)

he [Pompey] was of an honest face but with a shameless spirit.

modestus ad alia omnia, nisi ad dominationem

(2.18 R/2.17 M)

modest toward all other things, except toward tyranny

What made Pompey uniquely dangerous in Sallust's eyes was his willingness to elevate his own interests at the expense of the republic and the ease with which he employed threats and extortion to bully the senate into compliance.³⁹ In his letter to the senate demanding aid in the Sertorian War,⁴⁰ he bluntly threatens to march on Rome if his requests are not granted:

Relicui vos estis: qui nisi subvenitis, invito et praedicente me exercitus hinc et cum eo omne bellum Hispaniae in Italiam transgradientur.

(2.86.10 R/2.98C M)

You [sc. the senate] are all that's left: unless you help, although I am unwilling but as I forewarned, my army will cross over from here into Italy, and with it the entire Spanish war.

With this threat, Pompey efficiently evokes the specters of Hannibal and Sulla against the senate; for Sallust's audience in the 30s, it would have brought to mind the more recent marches of Julius Caesar and Octavian, as well. Pompey's willingness to employ more or less explicit threats of violence reaped him rich rewards; he repeatedly extorted and menaced his way into extra-legal triumphs and commands.⁴¹

In sum, Sallust's Pompey seems to have been *a* villain of the text, if not *the* villain; he embodied the worst qualities of Sallust's world. It is thus unsurprising that Sallust uses Pompey to enact the threat posed by civil war to

his own chosen medium: the writing of history. In what follows, I will demonstrate that Sallust's Pompey makes a multi-pronged attack on the utility of traditional historiography. First, he undermines the integrity of history-writing by hiring a personal historian to commemorate his deeds. Second, as we have seen in the cases of Octavian and Sertorius, he usurps the role of the historian and tries to influence the historical memory of his accomplishments himself by reframing a civil war (against Sertorius) as a foreign conquest (of the Spanish). Finally, in his letter to the senate requesting reinforcements in the Sertorian war, he explicitly calls into question the efficacy of language, menacingly reminding the senate that actions carry greater force than words (*res plus valet quam verba*, 2.86.6 R). This claim invokes the familiar Sallustian antithesis of words versus deeds, and, read programmatically, raises the question of what value the recording of *res gestae* retains in a world where men possessing not only political power but also loyal private armies were eager to dictate the terms in which their reigns would be remembered.

One way of dictating one's own historical memory is to employ a personal historian, either bringing the writer on campaign to observe first-hand or commissioning a history later on. Theophanes of Mytilene was a client of Pompey's dating back to Pompey's eastern campaigns in the early 60s BCE; among his many services to Pompey was the composition of a history of Pompey's campaign against Mithridates in the late 60s.⁴² As a reward for writing this history, Theophanes was granted Roman citizenship.⁴³ In commissioning this work, Pompey followed the precedent of his model Alexander,⁴⁴ who had employed one Callisthenes, great-nephew of his teacher Aristotle, as his official historian.⁴⁵ While the *poeta cliens* is a more familiar model,⁴⁶ the practice of soliciting or hiring a personal historian was also not unknown in the late republic. Cicero famously tried to persuade his friend Luceius to write an account of his victory over Catiline in 63 (*Fam.* 5.12). Although it seems that Luceius demurred,⁴⁷ that Cicero was comfortable plainly asking him to do it suggests that this was an accepted practice. For someone who seeks to control his own narrative, the advantages of employing a personal historian are obvious. First of all, the patron can expect a positive and even flattering depiction⁴⁸ which emphasizes those aspects he thinks most important.⁴⁹ The patron of history can thus still influence the depiction of himself without being so immodest as to do it himself; to do so would run the risk of seeming tastelessly self-promotional.⁵⁰ We can imagine that Theophanes' account of Pompey's campaign against Mithridates would have portrayed Pompey in a much more sympathetic (and even glorified) light than Sallust's version would have if the *Histories* extended that far.⁵¹

Pompey's efforts to control the narrative extended beyond supporting a personal historian in Theophanes; he inserted himself into the commemorative

process, as well.⁵² In Sallust's account of his victory in Spain, Pompey takes an active, first-hand role in trying to manipulate the historical memory of his deeds. In particular, he attempts to "rewrite" his victory over Sertorius as the conquest of a foreign enemy. By framing the conflict as the suppression of a native Spanish revolt and eliding Sertorius' name from the record, Pompey deflects attention from the fact that the Sertorian War was a civil war, and that his victory had come at the expense of Roman citizens.

According to Sallust, on Pompey's victory march home from Spain, he set up trophies to commemorate not a victory over Sertorius, a Roman commander, but over a Spanish army:

de victis Hispanis tropaea in Pyrenaei iugis constituit

(3.63 R/3.89 M)

he set up the trophies on the ridges of the Pyrenees for his conquests of the Spanish.⁵³

Pliny confirms that Pompey set up such a monument to commemorate his victory in Spain (*NH* 7.96).⁵⁴ Maurenbrecher assigned this fragment to Sallust's account of the end of the war with Sertorius in Spain.⁵⁵ Pompey's need to portray the victory over Sertorius' army as a foreign conquest was twofold. The more immediate and practical concern was that, according to Roman tradition, the senate would not grant Pompey a triumph for a victory over a Roman citizen.⁵⁶ According to Florus, Pompey intentionally left Sertorius' name off the dedication for just this reason:

Bellum Sertorianum quid amplius quam Sullanae proscriptionis hereditas fuit? Hostile potius an civile dixerim nescio, quippe quod Lusitani Celtiberique Romano gesserint duce ... victores duces externum id magis quam civile bellum videri voluerunt, uti triumpharent

(2.10.1)

What more was the Sertorian war than the legacy of the Sullan proscriptions? I do not know whether to call it a war against a foreign enemy or a civil war, because the Lusitani and Celtiberi fought under a Roman general ... The victorious leaders wanted it to be considered a foreign rather than civil war so that they could celebrate a triumph.

Pompey wanted another triumph; for this to be granted, he needed to boast about the conquered Spaniards (*devictis Hispanis*) but leave Sertorius out of it.

More generally, Pompey must have known that by 72 BCE, the year of his victory in Spain, the Roman populace was weary of civil conflicts. Pompey also recognized his dependence on the goodwill of the people. It would not have been politically expedient for Pompey to remind the public that his victory was over another Roman. Sertorius had been away from the city for a long time and was commanding foreign troops, but it must have been difficult to forget entirely that he was, indeed, a fellow Roman. For Pompey to boast

explicitly about Sertorius' demise, then, would have been to risk alienating the people on whose goodwill he depended.

Sallust thus represents Pompey as an important antecedent for Octavian in the deceptive repackaging of civil wars; Sertorius and his forces become nameless Spanish barbarians just as Sextus Pompey and his followers became brigands and pirates. As Sallust's Sertorius did, Pompey sidesteps the need for a historian by asserting his version of history in other media. However, Pompey is shown to be more successful at usurping the historian's role than Sertorius was. While the former employed an ephemeral medium (scars on his body) that he could only control while he was alive (*vivos*), Pompey finds more permanent forms of commemoration: a physical monument and a triumph.⁵⁷ When he is granted a first-person voice by Sallust, Pompey will even more explicitly and emphatically question the value of traditional history-writing. *Verba*, he will propose, are insignificant compared with *res*, and Pompey is the one in control of the latter. Furthermore, Pompey will identify a particular type of *verba* that have lost their efficacy: those that record *res gestae*.

The Letter of Pompey is particularly valuable, as it gives voice to one of the central characters of the narrative, a character who seems to be at the heart of Sallust's critiques. It is unclear precisely to what extent the Letter of Pompey in the *Histories* reflects a historical letter sent by Pompey himself and to what extent it is a Sallustian creation. McGushin notes that, while Sallust may well have had access to an original letter of Pompey, the *Histories'* version of it is perfectly consistent with the portrait of Pompey shown throughout the work; although it is probably not an outright fabrication, Sallust's hand is evident.⁵⁸

The letter opens with a description of the challenges facing Pompey's army in Spain. They have exhausted all their resources and Pompey's own contributions (2.86.2–3); Pompey is furthermore hindered by the inexperience and inadequate numbers of his troops (2.86.5). After outlining these obstacles, Pompey reminds the senate of his accomplishments in the Sertorian War thus far in a masterful display of *praeteritio*:

Quid deinde proelia aut expeditiones hibernas, oppida excisa aut recepta enumerem, quando res plus valet quam verba? Castra hostium apud Sucronem capta et proelium apud flumen Turiam et dux hostium C. Herennius cum urbe Valentia et exercitu deleti satis clara vobis sunt

(2.86.6 R/2.98.6 M)

Why should I enumerate, then, the battles or winter expeditions, the towns razed or captured, since actions are stronger than words? The camps of the enemy captured at Sucro and the battle at the river Turia and the leader of the enemies, Herennius, destroyed along with the city Valentia and his army – these are famous enough to you.

In exchange for these accomplishments, the senate has repaid Pompey with

“shortages and starvation (*egestatem et famem redditis*, 2.86.6).” If no relief is offered, Pompey will be compelled to return to Italy; his closing remarks, as was discussed above, are a flimsily veiled threat to visit civil war upon the city.⁵⁹ The matter is taken up by the consuls of the following year (Lucius Lucullus and Marcus Cotta), who are disturbed by Pompey’s message, both because of the gravity of the situation and because of the potential damage to their own careers should Pompey return home with his army (2.86.11).

This passage invokes a familiar Sallustian antithesis: *res* versus *verba*, action versus words. This pairing appears throughout the corpus in a variety of contexts, implied in the action of the narrative and explicitly articulated by characters and even Sallust himself in his own authorial voice. In Sallust’s world, men frequently say one thing and do (or believe) another.⁶⁰ Furthermore, as has been discussed, Sallust is particularly concerned with the pressure exerted by civil war on the relationship between words and deeds.⁶¹ Pompey’s apparent dismissal of the power of language seems to validate Sallust’s anxieties. The surface message is clear enough. Powerful men with private armies do not *need* to flatter, to persuade, or to justify their actions with words; however, should they wish to use language to shape perception of their actions, the pernicious linguistic slippage of civil strife makes it all the easier for them to employ appealing but specious pretexts. Pompey’s letter, of course, relies upon *verba* to convey his demands; however, Pompey is not limited to the use of *verba* to make his point when he sits with his army in Spain, prepared to either carry on the war or march back into Italy (2.86.10). The words, perhaps, carry less weight than the implicit threat of civil war.

If this were Sallust’s primary point it would be a sound one, though not especially novel. Sallust’s audience had seen multiple examples in their lifetimes of men who said one thing and did another and who dispensed with discussion and negotiation in favor of action at the head of a loyal army. Furthermore, such claims were not new to historiography; this line of thinking appears as early as Thucydides and as recently as the fragments of other late Republican historians.⁶² However, the precise nature of the *type* of words that Pompey rejects suggests that we should read his claim “*res plus valet quam verba*” programmatically, in the context of Sallust’s ongoing concern with the continued efficacy of historiography under the triumvirs. Pompey’s written words were ineffective insofar as his complaints went unheeded until he threatened to back them up with action; the verbal threat was effective, and the senate sent the requested support. The prioritization of deeds over words by Sallust’s Pompey is unsurprising. According to Sallust, this is why Rome has lacked the quantity and quality of historians that Athens possessed; Rome’s great men demanded praise in exchange for their achievements, but expected others to do this for them, and did not think it was their task to

praise the deeds of others (*sua ab aliis benefacta laudari quam ipse aliorum narrare malebat*). Unless someone took responsibility for committing the Romans' achievements to writing, they ran the risk of being remembered as less than they were.⁶³

The link between the words/deeds antithesis and historiography is further borne out by the particular type of words to which Pompey seems to refer. Pompey writes that, specifically, there is no need to recount his exploits for the sake of convincing the senate (*Quid deinde proelia aut expeditiones hibernas, oppida excisa aut recepta enumerem ...* "Why should I enumerate, then, the battles or winter expeditions, the towns razed or captured ..."). Sallust's Pompey does not dismiss the use of *verba* altogether, but he rejects the practice of recording *res gestae*. Power, Pompey suggests, rests only with those who have the capacity to back up verbal threats with action; only those who are able to make things happen are relevant, not those who record the things that have already occurred.

As has been discussed, in the prologues of the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* Sallust asserted that the task of recording *res gestae* is valuable and necessary.

Pulchrum est bene facere rei publicae, etiam bene dicere haud absurdum est...

(*Cat.* 3.1)

It is a fine thing to act well on behalf of the republic; moreover, it is hardly useless to speak well on its behalf ...

Ceterum ex aliis negotiis quae ingenio exercentur in primis magno usui est memoria rerum gestarum. Quoius de virtute quia multi dixere, praetereundum puto, simul ne per insolentiam quis existumet memet studium meum laudando extollere

(*Jug.* 4.1–2)

But out of those pursuits which are conducted with the mind, the recording of things that have happened is of the greatest use. Concerning the value of this, because many have spoken about it, I think it can be passed over (also, in order that no one think that, out of pride, I am elevating my own interest by praising it).

As we have seen, however, Sallust is not uniformly sanguine in the monographs about historiography's promise. He specifically invokes the tension between words and deeds in the prologue of the *Catiline* and argues that the task of writing history is more difficult than it seems, especially in comparison with the modest praise historians receive for their effort.⁶⁴ Historians face a near-impossible challenge; although they are limited to the use of mere words, they are expected to somehow match the magnitude of the subject being narrated, and whether they praise or censure their subjects they will inevitably be targeted with claims of fabrication or bias. As we have also seen, the *Histories'* preface seems not to have contained even a tempered or

ambivalent statement about the utility of writing history. While it is possible that the prologue of the *Histories* contained reflections on historiography similar to those in the monographs that were lost in the transmission of the text, we certainly may not assume this. The *Histories*' characters thus take over the function of programmatic statements, and Sallust's Sertorius and Pompey embody Sallust's anxieties with their efforts to devalue or even dispense with written history altogether. If the historian's representation of the past will always be inadequate, they seem to suggest, what need is there for history writers? A possible defense of historiography comes from an unlikely source in the *Histories*: a runaway gladiator, whose oversized role in Roman history and reception originated with Sallust's depiction of the revolt he led.

IV Spartacus: *actor* in search of *auctor*

While Sertorius and Pompey function as "historians" in the *Histories*, Sallust's Spartacus is a figure in need of a historian. Readings of Spartacus tend to be conditioned by his rich afterlife in modern media, portrayals which bear little resemblance to Sallust's version of the character. In contemporary thought he has been a champion of the proletariat,⁶⁵ a symbol of dissent against McCarthyism,⁶⁶ and a brooding hero in a maelstrom of violence and sex.⁶⁷ In Sallust's *Histories*, however, Spartacus plays none of these roles.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, he does seem to have been a central figure in the narrative, and like Sertorius is described with programmatic language that suggests he plays a role in Sallust's meta-historical reflections, as well.

The very fact of Spartacus' prominence in the *Histories* suggests his importance to Sallust. The Roman world had faced two major slave revolts before the Spartacus War, both in Sicily, the first from 135 to 132 BCE and the second from 104 to 100 BCE. Neither of the earlier revolts came to be defined by one figure in the way the Spartacus War did. When individual actors are cited in pre-Sallustian accounts of either Sicilian slave revolt, they are stock characters rather than well-developed, multi-faceted individuals. More specifically, the leaders of the rebelling slaves in the First and Second Slave Wars are standard Eastern foreigner-types, portrayed as mystics or magicians.

The Syrian slave Eunus, identified as the leader of the initial outbreak, is the individual character who most stands out in Diodorus Siculus' account.⁶⁹ Eunus professed mystical abilities, and had become famous for performing absurd feats like pretending to breathe fire and making predictions about the future which occasionally and randomly proved correct.⁷⁰ Because of his influence, he was approached by a group of slaves plotting against their owner Damophilos. Eunus convinced them that the gods favored their undertaking

and led them on a violent raid against the city of Enna; after Damophilos was executed, the rebels named Eunus their king.⁷¹ Eunus is thus portrayed as decidedly un-Roman. By emphasizing his use of magic to deceive his fellow slaves, Diodorus positions Eunus as a menacing outsider.⁷² Other contemporary and near-contemporary accounts give even less information about Eunus (or any other relevant individual). In his speeches against Verres, Cicero briefly cites the events of the First Slave War but does not mention any of the slaves by name.⁷³

Accounts of the Second Slave War from the first century BCE emphasize the roles of individuals even less than the narratives of the first revolt. In Photius' version of Diodorus' account, one Varius is singled out as leading an early outbreak in the revolt, but he drops out of the narrative thereafter.⁷⁴ The character Salvius, chosen as king by the rebels after their defeat of Marcus Titinius' troops, bears a striking resemblance to Diodorus' Eunus.⁷⁵ Constantine Porphyrogenetos' version of Diodorus notes that Salvius pretended to be the Seleucid king Tryphon, who had usurped the Syrian throne in 142 BCE; Salvius is thus explicitly connected with the East. Their respective depictions are thus similar enough to suggest either that Salvius is modeled on Eunus or both are versions of the stereotypical mystic Eastern foreigner.⁷⁶ Eunus and Salvius are the most conspicuous individuals among the rebelling slaves in first century accounts of the First and Second Slave Wars, but neither enjoys a lasting reputation at all comparable to the *fama* of Spartacus, perhaps because both characters hew so closely to well-worn stereotypes.⁷⁷

On the contrary, Spartacus is the product of a storied literary history, and emerges as one of the more colorful characters of antiquity. Sallust's *Histories* are our earliest extensive account of the Spartacus War.⁷⁸ It is described at length and in detail by later authors like Plutarch and Appian, but their works are much later and most probably used the *Histories* as their source.⁷⁹ Spartacus does not appear to have been an important figure in first century accounts of the revolt besides the *Histories*. Diodorus mentioned Spartacus by name, but the fragmentary nature of Diodorus' account makes it difficult to know the extent of his role in that narrative.⁸⁰ In one of his orations against Verres, Cicero criticized the Sicilian governor for his response to the potential threat of the slave revolt crossing over to Sicily, but he never mentions Spartacus by name.⁸¹ Sallust's *Histories* stand apart from other contemporary accounts for their apparently detailed treatment of not just the Spartacus War, but Spartacus himself as a character.

Maurenbrecher assigned this description to a character sketch of Spartacus:

ingens ipse virium atque animi

The possible character sketch of Spartacus suggests that he was an important figure in the text. Scholars have long recognized the programmatic importance of Sallust's character portraits. These introductory character-sketches mark their subjects as important to the narrative or its themes.⁸³ In some cases (e.g., Pompey), the character's importance is already clear. However, in the case of a previously unfamiliar character like Spartacus, this introduction would have signaled to the reader the character's centrality; from Spartacus' first appearance in the text, the reader would be primed to expect him to play an important role in what follows.

Sallust's audience might have expected a Spartacus who resembled the slave revolt leaders they already knew: a one-dimensional magician like Eunus and Salvius, or a generally anonymous figure as in other contemporary accounts of the Spartacus War. Sallust, however, gives us a complex and nuanced character. Sallust's Spartacus is a runaway Thracian gladiator – a barbarian – but his behavior defies expectations by not conforming to “barbarian” stereotypes. Celebrating their victory over the praetor Varinius, the rebel slaves disregarded Spartacus' orders and viciously attacked the inhabitants of Lucania, assaulting and even slaughtering them before looting their homes (3.44 R/3.98 M). Spartacus tries and fails to stop them:

neque sanctum aut nefandum quicquam fuit irae barbarorum et servili ingenio. Quae Spartacus nequiens prohibere, multis precibus quom oraret, celeritate praeverterent ...

(3.44.5–6 R)

Nothing was sacred or unspeakable in the face of the anger and servile spirit of the barbarians. Spartacus, unable to prevent these things, although he begged with many entreaties that they should anticipate with speed ...

Sallust's Spartacus opposes this typically “barbarian” behavior, instead offering a counter-example of moderation and discipline.⁸⁴ Sallust rejects the historiographical stereotype of the rebel slave, and instead crafts his Spartacus as a representative of order.

Furthermore, Sallust depicts Spartacus and the other leaders of the slave revolt attempting to engage in rational deliberation; this is a process in which we should expect to see Romans participate, but not runaway slaves. Sallust highlights this contradiction by describing Spartacus with language usually reserved for the Roman civic sphere. As was discussed in [Chapter Two](#), the language used to describe Spartacus and his colleagues in Fragment 4.27 (*consultare*, *dissidere*, *seditio*) belongs to the civic sphere and is generally reserved for Romans (often those of senatorial rank) in the rest of the Sallustian corpus and in other contemporary literature. Eunus and Salvius each

led their respective revolts alone and by employing magic, trickery, and intimidation; in other words, they acted like a Roman audience would expect barbarians to act. Sallust's Spartacus and fellow slave leaders, on the other hand, are co-conspirators who deliberate, debate, and argue with each other as if they were senators at work in the *curia*.

Sallust thus defies expectations by elevating a Thracian gladiator to a starring role in the *Histories*, creating a complex figure out of an individual whom we might expect to be minimized or portrayed according to tropes. The choice of Spartacus, in particular, for historiographical emphasis could not have been random. Pragmatically, Spartacus was a blank slate; Sallust had more room for free characterization of Spartacus than the *Histories'* better-known figures like Mithridates. However, Sallust's choice may be more pointed. The defeat of Spartacus was a critical victory for Pompey and Crassus, who used it as the platform of their campaign for the consulship of 70. The choice not only to elevate Spartacus but also to portray him as a Roman-like figure may have been calculated to undercut Crassus and Pompey's political use of Spartacus by tainting their victory with echoes of civil war (even if that civil war was manufactured by the historian, as we shall see in this section).

We can better understand Sallust's complex construction of Spartacus by reading him as a companion figure to Sertorius in Sallust's meta-historical narrative. This is a logical pairing; both were targets of Pompey's campaigns in the 70s, and both represented meaningful challenges to Rome's fragile stability in the aftermath of Sulla's dictatorship.⁸⁵ While Sallust's Sertorius is shown overcoming *invidia scriptorum* and "writing" his own history through his boastful display of war wounds, Sallust's Spartacus is ineffective at self-promotion. Sallust shows Spartacus' campaign crumbling around him, and Spartacus overwhelmed by the task of controlling his followers. Unlike Sertorius, Spartacus does not have the luxury of contemplating how he will be remembered; without a historian to record his deeds, Spartacus would be lost to history.

In contrast with Sertorius, Spartacus never appears to show interest in securing his *memoria*. Instead, we see him plagued by insubordination and disorganization among his followers, and repeatedly challenged for leadership of the revolt. Fragments 3.42 and 3.44 R show Spartacus becoming increasingly despondent. In 3.42, Crixus defies Spartacus regarding the best response to Varinius and his troops, who were advancing on the rebels' camp:

Atque illi certamine consilii inter se iuxta seditionem erant, Crixo et gentis eiusdem Gallis atque Germanis obviam ire et ultro <of>ferre pugnam cupientibus, contra Sparta<co impetum dissuadente> ...

But they [the fugitives] were close to riot among themselves because of a dispute over the plan, with Crixus and the Gauls of his race and the Germans who desired to go directly and willingly offer battle; Spartacus, on the other hand, opposed the attack ...

This dispute is the first of two in which Spartacus lost a detachment of followers under someone else's leadership; later, another group led by Gaius Gannicius and Castus had broken off (4.27 R, discussed above; cf. Plutarch, *Crassus* 11). In 3.44, Spartacus continues to lose his control over the rebellion; as was discussed, he is unable to prevent the rebels from looting and slaughtering the Lucanians. Although Sallust praised him as *ingens virium atque animi* at his first appearance in the text, Spartacus is threatened with a return to obscurity as the narrative moves forward. His position has become increasingly precarious, and the challenge posed by Crixus in particular threatens to topple him from his position of visibility and authority. Spartacus does not have the luxury of worrying about his *memoria*.

Nevertheless, Spartacus plays a significant role in the *Histories*, receiving narrative treatment on par with that of major Roman figures. It is likely that Sertorius would have overcome *invidia scriptorum* and made it into the historical record even without Sallust's help; a traitorous governor who led a rebellion against the state could hardly have been ignored. However, Spartacus was not guaranteed a lasting place in history as an individual. The slave revolt had a significant enough impact on Rome to be included in historical texts,⁸⁶ but Spartacus could have remained anonymous, or have been treated as a stock-figure like Eunus and Salvius. Sallust, as historian, singled him out and elevated him to a leading role in the *Histories*. If Sallust's Sertorius represents the author's anxieties about the changing role of historiography under the triumvirate, his portrait of Spartacus may represent residual optimism about the continuing value of writing history. As has been discussed, the confident pronouncements of the monographs about the necessity of the historian's craft are absent from what remains of the *Histories*. However, Spartacus is a sign that Sallust has not abandoned all hope. While bold programmatic statements were perhaps too indelicate for life under the triumvirs, Sallust demonstrates that the historian still has the ability to magnify or obscure as he sees fit by showing his power to elevate a Thracian gladiator to a major figure in his *magnum opus*.

This reading of Spartacus gives us a fresh perspective on a fragment that has long been taken at face value. Fragment 4.31 has generally been assumed to express Sallust's admiration for Spartacus:⁸⁷

haud impigre neque inultus occiditur

(4.31 R/4.41 M)

he died, most boldly and not unavenged.⁸⁸

The literal meaning is clear enough: Spartacus is not *inultus* because fought bravely to the end, avenging his own death by taking out Roman soldiers as he fell in battle.⁸⁹

However, we can also read *inultus* on a meta-literary level. In this reading, Sallust himself is Spartacus' *ultor*, saving him from the indignity of oblivion by writing him into the *Histories*. A parallel use of *ultor* is found in the first book of Horace's *Epistles*. In the nineteenth *Epistle*, addressed to Maecenas, Horace takes to task his imitators and laments that his poems have not found ideal readers.

non ego ventosae plebis suffragia venor
inpensis cenarum et tritae munere vestis;
non ego nobilium scriptorum auditor et ultor
grammaticas ambire tribus et pulpita dignor (*Epist.* 1.19.37–40)

I do not purchase the applause of the fickle mob
with the funding of feasts and the gift of a worn cloak;
I, the audience and avenger of great writers,
do not deign to canvass the tribes of grammarians and their desks.

Fraenkel has argued that *nobilium scriptorum* here refers to Archilocus, Alcaeus, and the rest of the early lyricists on whose poems Horace modeled his work; according to Fraenkel, Horace saw himself as responsible for the revival of works that were threatened with oblivion.⁹⁰ Although Horace here portrays himself as “avenging” or “resuscitating” previous poets rather than historical figures (as in the case of Sallust and Spartacus), this passage at least suggests that the author could be considered a sort of literary *ultor*. It is unsurprising that Sallust and Horace seem to be sharing language here. Horace was most probably familiar with the *Histories*, which are a likely source for his musings on the Blessed Isles in *Epode* 16.⁹¹

Cicero had also used the language of vindication to describe the author's ability to avenge figures of the past through writing:

vel me hercule etiam ut laudem eorum iam prope senescentem, quantum ego possem, ab oblivione hominum atque a silentio vindicarem. Nam si ex scriptis cognosci ipsi suis potuissent, minus hoc fortasse mihi esse putassem laborandum ...

(*De orat.* 2.7–8)

... and, moreover, [my purpose was] that, to the extent that I am able, I rescue the glory of these men, already near decline, from the forgetfulness of men and from silence. For if they were able to be remembered from their own writings, I perhaps would have thought this task less necessary to be undertaken ...

Here Cicero uses the language of vindication to describe his ability as a writer to save the eloquence of Crassus and Antony from oblivion; his role is all the more necessary because Antony and Crassus have not left their own written records. Although Cicero does not use *ultor* or its cognates here, *vindicare* is closely related to the vocabulary used by both Horace and Sallust.⁹²

It should not surprise us to see that the commemorative value of literature was a shared preoccupation of these three writers, although they represent different genres. All three might arguably be characterized as “triumviral,” both chronologically and thematically. Cicero and Horace’s careers bridged the transitions both into and out of the triumvirate, respectively, while Sallust’s works fall squarely in the middle of the triumviral years. As we have seen, triumviral literature is characteristically concerned with the protection of memory and meaning in the face of a ruling regime that could – and would – use its influence to stifle and distort. “Avenging” Spartacus and rescuing him from the threat of historical oblivion allowed Sallust to demonstrate the continuing power of historiography. If Sallust could give prominence to a character like Spartacus, it might still be possible to speak for those the triumvirs would silence.

V Historians in the *Histories*

The figures of the *Histories* discussed here were not Sallust’s first characters to explore the tension between words and deeds and, in particular, the difficulty of using words to represent *res gestae*; these issues permeate Sallust’s entire corpus. As has been discussed, Sallust uses the prefaces to the monographs to justify his choice to write history and defend its utility (though not without reservations). Furthermore, various characters in the *Catiline* and *Jugurtha* reflect on the breakdown of language and the subsequent challenge to faithful commemoration of the past. Following Sallust’s own claims to the same effect (*Cat.* 38.2, 1.12 R), Cato echoes Thucydides’ famous commentary on language in *stasis*; he observes that customary definitions are being perverted (*iam pridem equidem nos vera vocabula amisimus*) and that this pernicious dishonesty is allowing the men who exploit it to dismantle the republic under fine pretexts (*quia bona aliena largiri liberalitas, malarum rerum audacia fortitudo vocatur, eo res publica in extremo sita est, Cat.* 52.11). In his speech in the *Jugurtha*,⁹³ Marius addresses his lack of aristocratic pedigree, and argues that his personal valor should speak for itself; his battle scars, hard-won rather than handed down by his ancestors, serve as his *images* (*hae sunt meae images, haec nobilitas, non hereditate relicta ut illa illis, sed quae ego meis plurimis laboribus et periculis quaesivi, Jug.* 85.30). Marius thus claims he

does not need the traditional forms of historical commemoration because he had found his own medium. Furthermore, he argues that his practical, first-hand experience in war is worth more than what his aristocratic rivals have only learned in theory:

Compare nunc, Quirites, cum illorum superbia me hominem novom. Quae illi audire et legere solent, eorum partem vidi, alia egomet gessi; quae illi litteris, ea militando didici. Nunc vos existumate facta an dicta pluris sint.

(*Jug.* 85.13–14)

Now, citizens, compare me, a ‘new man,’ with the arrogance of those men. The things about which they are accustomed to hear or read – I have seen some of them first-hand and done others myself. Things which they learned from books, I learned by campaigning. Judge now for yourselves whether deeds or words are more powerful.

Marius’ speech, and in particular its concerns about historical commemoration and the comparison between words and deeds, finds echoes in the characters of the *Histories* discussed in this chapter. His use of battle scars as proof of virtue is similar to Sertorius’ boasting (1.76 R). His charge to the assembly – “Judge now for yourselves whether deeds or words are more powerful” (*facta an dicta pluris sint*) – is echoed in both language and theme by Pompey (*res plus valet quam verba*). Grethlein has made a compelling argument that Marius’ criticisms of the *nobiles*’ use of the past (benefitting from their ancestors’ history of virtue while not themselves living up to that standard) echo and complement Sallust’s own concern that positive *exempla* are no longer being imitated, and that a new form of commemoration (presumably historiography) is needed to encourage the beneficial use of the past.⁹⁴ Sallust may well have had historiography in mind as a theme of Marius’ speech,⁹⁵ and Marius himself is a clear antecedent of the more directly historiographically minded characters of the *Histories*.

As was discussed in [Chapter One](#), I suggest that the *Histories*’ apparent lack of explicit claims for the utility of history-writing imply a deep pessimism about historiography’s continued efficacy under a regime with autocratic tendencies. This uncertainty did not lend itself to open authorial reflection. To judge on the basis of extant fragments, Sallust does not seem to have openly reflected on the project’s historical value to the same extent that he did in the monographs. This is not to say that historiographical considerations were not central to the *Histories*. To question explicitly the purpose of his work might undermine Sallust’s project, but directness is also just not the *Histories*’ style; as we have seen, the work is suggestive and allusive rather than blunt or hectoring. Sallust’s creation of “historians” in the *Histories* supplies him with ciphers through whom to enact his anxieties indirectly. Although Sallust had used characters in the monographs to explore his concerns about language and

the use of the past, he uses the *Histories*' characters not just to highlight the tension between words and deeds, but to examine that contrast specifically in the context of historiography.

The *Histories*' central figures explore and challenge the value of historiography implicitly by trying to act as their own "historians" with varying degrees of success. We have seen how Sallust uses key programmatic language to link the characters of Sertorius, Pompey, and Spartacus with the historiographical anxieties of the *Histories*. Sallust specifically tells us that Sertorius uses his own form of commemoration (battle scars) to overcome *invidia scriptorum*, thus placing Sertorius' method of *memoria*-creation directly in contrast with traditional history-writing. Pompey claims that actions are stronger than words (*res plus valet quam verba*), and not just any words; in the context of his letter, the specific *verba* that have lost their power are *verba rerum gestarum*, words recounting the deeds of the past. Spartacus is described using language of vindication (*inultus*), which had been used by other triumviral writers to refer to literature's power to "avenge" and rescue the voiceless from historical oblivion.

The final verdict, perhaps, rests not in the hands of any one of these characters, but with Sallust himself. Whatever Sallust's state of mind regarding the future or lasting value of writing history as he composed the *Histories*, he ultimately decided it was both reasonable and necessary to continue devoting himself to the task. Not only did he keep writing history, he took on a project even greater in scale than his previous two works. This fact alone suggests that Spartacus, the runaway slave who might have faded into historical anonymity or caricature without Sallust's intervention, is the character who most represents a persistent sense of optimism about historiography's continuance under the triumvirs. As Spartacus demonstrated, the historian still had the power to create a competitive narrative, one that could challenge the party line of those in power by elevating the obscure and downplaying the great. A Pompey – or an Octavian – might attempt to sanitize the memory of civil wars, but Sallust's narrative could refuse to allow its elision.

Notes

- 1 "With Sulla, the art of self-representation reached a new peak... Few Romans before him had lavished so much attention on their public image." Smith 2009: 65. See also Flower 2015, who argues that Sulla's memoirs were so successful in shaping how the dictator would be portrayed by later sources because of the author's vivid narrative and (apparently) detailed and candid self-characterization.
- 2 Zanker 1988: 33–100 and Osgood 2006: 240–241.
- 3 Lepidus does not seem to have created a clearly articulated "brand" for himself in his public representations like Antony and Octavian did, and remains the most obscure of the

- triumvirs; see Weigle 1992.
- 4 Antony was less successful than Octavian at converting self-fashioning into political capital; his chosen images were readily turned against him by Octavian, who emphasized their Hellenistic aspects and used them as a foil for his own *Romanitas*.
 - 5 E.g., Sen. *Clem.* 11.1, Suet. *Aug.* 15, Cass. Dio 48.14.4. See Syme 1939:177; Scott 1933: 27–28 on the implausibility of the accusations. Borgies 2016 details the propaganda war between Octavian and Antony, focusing in particular on invective (versus other media like coinage and poetry).
 - 6 γραμματεῖα, ὅσα τῆς στάσεως σύμβολα, ἔκαιε (App. *BCiv.* 5.132.548).
 - 7 For overviews of Octavian’s propaganda during the triumviral period and later as Augustus, see Zanker 1988; Osgood 2006; Lange 2009.
 - 8 Osgood 2006: 350–364 summarizes the ancient evidence.
 - 9 Osgood 2006: 166.
 - 10 On the inversion of gender roles in civil war, see Jal 1963: 352–354; Hemelrijk 2004; Osgood 2006: 81–82.
 - 11 Osgood 2006: 166.
 - 12 Hallett 1977; Osgood 2006: 166.
 - 13 See, for example, App. *BCiv.* 5.72 and Cass. Dio 48.19. However, charging an opponent with recruiting slaves seems to have been conventional (e.g., Caes. *BCiv.* 1.24), so it is difficult to know the extent to which it is true in Sextus’ case.
 - 14 While earlier scholars (e.g., Syme) accepted and perpetuated the Augustan narrative of “Sextus the bandit,” Welch 2012 has offered a thoughtful challenge to the traditional paradigm.
 - 15 Pelling 2009.
 - 16 Caesar’s contemporaries recognized that his commentaries were polished and sophisticated, something closer to “history” than “commentary”; see, e.g., Aulus Hirtius’ preface to *BGall.* 8 and Cicero as quoted by Suetonius (*Caes.* 56). However, his use of the *commentarius* form maintained the pretext that he was entrusting his story to a future historian.
 - 17 Of course, he would later employ a circle of poets in the interest of self-fashioning, but this was after Sallust’s death.
 - 18 Probably published in the mid-20s BCE (Smith 2013: 456), it is thus difficult to say what awareness (if any) Sallust had of this particular project. As Pelling 2009 notes, the lack of an “autobiographical” tradition in the modern sense and the “looseness of generic expectation” (44) surrounding *commentarii* make Octavian’s work difficult to classify.
 - 19 *O quam diversus a patre! Ille Cilicas extinxerat, hic se piratica tuebatur*, “Oh, how different from his father! The elder wiped out the Cilician pirates, the younger supported himself by piracy” (Florus 2.18.8). See also Hor. *Epod.* 9.7–10, Vell. Pat. 2.73.3, Livy *Per.* 128, and Luc. *BCiv.* 6.419–423.
 - 20 See especially Powell and Welch 2002; Welch 2012.
 - 21 Osgood 2006: 160. See, for example, App. *BCiv.* 5.19 (τότε γὰρ δὴ γυναικός τι παθοῦσα ἡ Φουλβία τὸν Λεύκιον ἐπέτριβεν ἐς τὴν διαφοράν, “Fulvia, behaving just like a woman, drove Lucius to discord”) and 59 (ἔδόκει δ’ ἀμφοτέροις ἐς πολλὰ συνοίσειν ὁ θάνατος, γυναιίου φιλοπράγμονος ἀπληλαγμένοις, ἡ διὰ τὸν Κλεοπάτρας ζῆλον ἐξερρίπισε τοσόνδε πόλεμον, “The death of this meddlesome woman, who had stirred up such a war on account of her jealousy of Cleopatra, seemed welcome to both sides, who wanted to be rid of her”). Cf. Livy, *Per.* 125, Vell. Pat. 2.74.2–4.

- 22 Books One through Three of the *Histories* cover the war in Spain. Book One contains an introductory character portrait of Sertorius and a brief account of his early career, and then picks up the main narrative with Metellus' campaign against Sertorius in 79–78. Book Two continues with the events of 77–74, including the appointment of Pompey to the Spanish War. The Spanish narrative concludes in Book Three with Sertorius' assassination. For modern biographies of Sertorius, see Schulten 1926; Spann 1987.
- 23 Scholars have been most interested in Fr. 1.76 for what it might reveal about Sallust's attitude toward Sertorius. Berve 1929; Schur 1934; Syme 1964; Gillis 1969; Katz 1983 agree that Sallust presented Sertorius in a positive light. Büchner 1982, on the other hand, argues that Sallust's portrait was hostile, depicting Sertorius as a traitor or foreign enemy. Spann 1987 takes a more moderate position; he dismisses Büchner's interpretation as based on passages "either uninformative, misinterpreted, or nonexistent" but suggests that Syme and others have exaggerated the laudatory character of Sallust's depiction of Sertorius.
- 24 This fragment is preserved by Aulus Gellius (2.27). The Gellius passage is discussed in more detail later in this section.
- 25 "Digressions and speeches lend variety. More than that, these devices enable a historian, breaking loose from time and space, to develop themes close to his heart. Hence the most valuable of clues to his idiosyncrasy" (Syme 1964: 68). On Sallust's character portraits as a particular type of digression, see Blänsdorf 2007.
- 26 The elder Cato, one of Sallust's literary models, expressed a similar sentiment in the *Origines*. A military tribune, Quintus Caedicius, had once performed a feat equalling that of Leonidas at Thermopylae, but did not receive equal fame because of the poverty of the Roman literary tradition: *Leonides Laco, qui simile apud Thermopylas fecit, propter eius virtutes omnis Graecia gloriam atque gratiam praecipuam claritudinis inclitissimae decoravere monumentis: signis, statuis, elogiis, historiis aliisque rebus gratissimum id eius factum habuere; at tribuno militum parva laus pro factis relict, qui idem fecerat atque rem servaverat*, "As for Leonidas the Spartan, who did something similar at Thermopylae: on account of his virtues all Greece embellished his glory and outstanding service with monuments of most celebrated distinction: with signs, statues, eulogies, histories and other works, they considered this deed of his most welcome. But praise slight in proportion to his deeds is left for the military tribune, who had done the same thing and saved the situation" (Peter fr. 83/Gell. *Attic Nights* 3.7).
- 27 Fr. 1.76–113 R cover Sertorius' flight from the proscriptions and the war in Spain through 80 BCE.
- 28 See Chapter One on Plutarch's use of the *Histories*.
- 29 For example, in the *Jugurtha*, Sallust's Marius addresses a public assembly to rally support for his war effort. He describes alienation from the nobility and declares that his battle scars, hard-won rather than handed down from his ancestors, serve as his *imagines* (*Non possum fidei causa imagines neque triumphos aut consulatus maiorum meorum ostentare, at, si res postulet, hastas, vexillum, phaleras, alia militaria dona, praeterea cicatrices advorso corpore. Hae sunt meae imagines, haec nobilitas, non hereditate relict, ut illa illis, sed quae ego meis plurimis laboribus et periculis quaesivi*, "I am not able to show *imagines* or the triumphs or consulships of my ancestors for the sake of your trust, but if the situation demands it, I can show spears, the banner, ornaments, other military prizes, and, moreover, the scars on the front of my body. These are my *imagines*, these are my nobility, not handed down as an inheritance like others', but which I won through my own many labors and risks" (*Jug.* 85.29–30).) Leigh 1995 gives numerous other examples in a comprehensive overview of the

use of wounds in the republican rhetorical tradition.

30 E.g., Badian 1962: 51; La Penna 1963: 223; Leigh 1995: 203.

31 Translation from Rolfe 1927.

32 *Ei primo coepere pessimum quemque et omnibus invisum indemnatum necare. Ea populus laetari et merito dicere fieri*, “They first began to put to death without trial each of the worst men, the most hateful to all. The people celebrated this and said it was done justly” (*Cat.* 51.29).

33 *Dein, crebris ignibus factis, plerumque noctis barbari more suo laetari, exultare, strepere vocibus ...* “Then, after many fires had been started, the barbarians celebrated through most of the night according to their custom, making a commotion with their shouts” (*Jug.* 98.6).

34 *Ita Vagenses biduom modo ex perfidia laetati*, “Thus the Vaccians rejoiced for just two days in their treachery” (*Jug.* 69.3). For other examples of *laetari*’s negative connotations, see also *Cat.* 31.1., 51.31, 51.34, 61.9.

35 Pompey enters the *Histories* in the context of his Spanish campaign. 2.17–21 R/2.15–19 M belong to the character sketch discussed above. 2.79 R/2.92 M describes reaction to Pompey’s march; 2.86 R/2.98 M his letter to the senate. Pompey appears in two fragments in Book Three upon the conclusion of the Sertorian War (3.62–63 R/3.88–89 M). Although we have no fragments describing Pompey’s conduct in the Spartacus War, he returns for the consular election of 70 in Book Four and the debate over the *lex Gabinia* in Book 5.

36 See further discussion in Chapter Four.

37 Syme 1964: 192.

38 La Penna 1963: 211 and 232–234 emphasizes Pompey’s embodiment of the key Sallustian vices of *ambitio* and *avaritia*.

39 Meyer 2010: “Everything is about him, overshadowing the situation in Spain, the situation of the army, even the Roman republic itself; everything will take second place to his own needs and desires, and this will make him very dangerous, indeed” (105). See also La Penna 1963: 235–236; Pasoli 1974: 104–108; Büchner 1982: 221.

40 That is, the letter ascribed to Pompey by Sallust in Book Two of the *Histories*; see further discussion below.

41 These irregular honors are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

42 Fragments of Theophanes in Jacoby *FGrHist* iiB 188.

43 *Cic. Arch.* 24. Plutarch further asserts that Pompey granted freedom to Mytilene in honor of Theophanes’ service (*Pomp.* 42). See Gold 1985 on the rewards for Theophanes’ writing and loyalty to Pompey.

44 “But Pompeius, believing from his earliest adolescence, because of the discussion among his partisans, that he would be similar to the king Alexander, was an imitator of his actions and plans,” *Sed Pompeius a prima adulescentia sermone fautorum similem fore se credens Alexandro regi, facta consultaque eius quidem aemulus erat* (3.62 R/3.88 M).

45 Callisthenes had previously written an account of the Third Sacred War (*Cic. Fam.* 5.12.2), in which Alexander’s father Philip would have played a significant role, as well as the *Hellenica*, a ten-book history of the period between the King’s Peace of 387/6 and the beginning of the Third Sacred War (*Diod. Sic.* 14.117.8). From 334, he traveled on campaign with Alexander, and chronicled the king’s conquests until he was executed in 327 for allegedly participating in a conspiracy against the king (*Plut. Alex.* 55). By this point he had already fallen out of Alexander’s favor because of his reservations about Alexander’s

- demands for *proskynesis* (Plutarch, *Alex.* 54, Arr. *Anab.* 4.10.1–4.12.5).
- 46 E.g., the poet Archias wrote an epic account of his patron Lucullus’ Mithridatic campaign; it was published in 63 BCE, after Pompey had replaced Lucullus in the east (Cic. *Arch.* 21).
- 47 Poseidonius had also declined the opportunity (*Att.* 2.1.1).
- 48 According to Polybius, Timaeus faulted Callisthenes for excessive flattery of Alexander (12.12b).
- 49 For example, in his letter to Lucceius, Cicero offers specific guidance about what should be included (his consulship of 63) and how it should be depicted (with emphasis on dramatic turns of fortune, *Fam.* 5.12.4–5).
- 50 Cicero advises Lucceius that, should he decline to write Cicero’s history, he will be compelled to do so himself, opening himself up to various charges: “But it does not elude you that there are problems with this type of writing. It is necessary that, when writing about themselves, they be more modest if something is to be praised, and if something is worthy of blame, they should pass it over. Add to that, moreover, that their trustworthiness is diminished, their authority is diminished; indeed, many criticize them and say that the heralds at the games are more modest, because when they have placed garlands on the other victors and have announced their names with a loud voice, when they themselves are to be granted garlands before the end of the games, they call upon another herald, in order that they not pronounce themselves victors in their own voice” (*sed, quod te non fugit, haec sunt in hoc genere vitia: et verecundius ipsi de sese scribant necesse est, si quid est laudandum, et praetereant, si quid reprehendendum est; accedit etiam, ut minor sit fides, minor auctoritas, multi denique reprehendant et dicant verecundiores esse praecones ludorum gymnycorum, qui cum ceteris coronas imposuerint victoribus eorumque nomina magna voce pronuntiarint, cum ipsi ante ludorum missionem corona donentur, alium praeconem adhibeant, ne sua voce se ipsi victores esse praedicent*, *Fam.* 5.12.8). Although there is still a delicate social code to be observed in asking someone else to write one’s own history (Hall 1998), one may avoid these pitfalls of self-commemoration by doing so.
- 51 It is anyone’s guess what the later books of the *Histories* would have covered if Sallust had completed the work before his death. Pace Syme 1964: 191, I find it plausible that Sallust would have continued through the death of Mithridates in 63, which would also conveniently bring the narrative up to the Catilinarian Conspiracy (with a little temporal overlap).
- 52 In light of Pompey’s naturally agonistic nature (*Cum alacribus saltu, cum velocibus cursu, cum validis vecte certabat*, “He used to compete in jumping with the quick, in running with the swift, in weightlifting with the strong,” 2.20 R/2.19 M), it is perhaps unsurprising to see him attempting to “compete” in the historical sphere as well as others.
- 53 This fragment is preserved by Servius in his commentary on a parallel use of *constituo* in *Aeneid* 11.6 (*CONSTITUIT TUMULO in colle, quia tropaea non figebantur nisi in eminentioribus locis. Sallustius de Pompeio ait ...*).
- 54 Also elsewhere in the *HN*: *Citerioris Hispaniae sicut conplurium provinciarum aliquantum vetus forma mutata est, utpote cum Pompeius Magnus tropaeis suis, quae statuebat in Pyrenaeo, DCCCLXVI oppida ab Alpibus ad fines Hispaniae ulterioris in dicionem ab se redacta testatus sit*, “The old shape of Hither Spain has been altered somewhat, just like many other provinces, insofar as Pompey Magnus testified on his trophies, which he set up in the Pyrenees, that 876 towns from the Alps to Further Spain had been brought under control by him” (*HN* 3.18)
- 55 Maurenbrecher was, accordingly, critical of previous unnamed editors who assigned the

fragment to the fourth book (“*Quantum in librum cur haec verba reicerint editores, sane nescio, cum et e reliquis fragmentis et ex Exuperantio elucere videatur et Hispaniam plane subactam et Pompeii reditum narratum esse libro tertio*”) rather than to the conclusion of the Sertorian War in Book Three.

- 56 Val. Max. 2.8.7 (though it is worth noting that Lange 2016 has recently challenged the traditional assumption that triumphs were not granted for civil war victories in the late republic). There were other problems with Pompey’s bid for the triumph, which the senate was evidently willing to overlook. First, he had not yet held the requisite office of either praetor or consul. Second, *triumphatores* were traditionally required to have waged the triumphant war within their own province, but Pompey’s province was Transalpinga, not Hispania (Ebel 1975). See Beard 2007: 196–219 on the formal and informal regulations on awarding a triumph, and Chapter Four here on exceptions made for Pompey.
- 57 Although the triumph was an event and thus ephemeral by definition, it brought with it various forms of physical commemoration. As a formally sanctioned honor, a triumph would have been recorded in the *fasti*; it could further be commemorated in coinage, inscriptions, artwork, monuments, and other durable media (see Beard 2007, especially 42–46 and 143–186). Furthermore, the audience for a triumph was enormous; compared to Sertorius’ boasting (presumably toward private audiences or assembled Spanish allies), an event this size would more effectively create a shared cultural memory.
- 58 “The language in which the demands are couched, the barely concealed threats the contain are in keeping with the vanity and arrogance which were undoubtedly real traits of Pompeius’ personality, even though Sallust, who detested the man, may have taken extra trouble to bring them into sharper focus in this context” (McGushin 1992: 242). Cf. Fronto *Ad Verum* 2.1.15: “There are letters in each language which were partly written by the generals themselves, but partly composed by the writers of histories or annals, such as that very famous letter by Thucydides of the general Nicias, sent from Sicily; or, in C. Sallustius, the reproachful letter of Mithridates to King Arsaces seeking aid and the stern letter of Cn. Pompey to the senate about his pay ...” (*Exstant epistolae utraque lingua partim ab ipsis ducibus conscriptis, partim a scriptoribus historiarum vel annalium compositae, ut illa Thucydidis nobilissima Niciae ducis epistula ex Sicilia missa; item apud C. Sallustium ad Arsacem regem Mithridatis auxilium implorantis litterae crinosae et Cn. Pompei ad senatum de stipendio litterae graves* ...).
- 59 “You are all that’s left: unless you help, although I am unwilling but as I forewarned, my army will cross over from here into Italy, and with it the entire Spanish war,” *Reliqui vos estis: qui nisi subvenitis, invito et praedicente me exercitus hinc et cum eo omne bellum Hispaniae in Italiam transgradientur* (2.86.10)
- 60 E.g., *Cat.* 10.5, 38.3; *Jug.* 10–11.1, 22, 48.1; 1.49.24 R, 3.15.12 R.
- 61 Cf. *Cat.* 52.11, 1.12 M.
- 62 Scanlon 1980: 80. Cf. Sempronius Asellio, *FRHist* 20 F10 (*facta sua spectare oportere, non dicta, si minus facundiosa essent*, “one should consider his acts, not his words, if they <his words> are less elegant”) and Q. Claudius Quadrigarius, *FRHist* 24 F11 (*ea Lucani ubi rescuerunt, sibi per fallacias verba data esse*, “When the Lucanians realized this, that words had been falsely given to them”).
- 63 *Cat.* 8; see full passage above. Cf. Thuc. 1.10.
- 64 *Cat.* 3.2 (full text above).
- 65 E.g., the Spartacus League in World War I-era Germany.

- 66 Howard Fast's novel *Spartacus* and Stanley Kubrick's 1960 film adaptation.
- 67 The Starz television series *Spartacus* (2010–2013).
- 68 As Shaw 2005 rightly observes, "Before the mid-decades of the eighteenth century Spartacus was, for all intents and purposes, unknown as the mythical historical figure that he was to become" (5). For a comprehensive overview of Spartacus' literary and media legacy, see both Shaw 2005; van Hoof 1984.
- 69 Two versions of Diodorus Siculus' account of the First Sicilian Slave War are preserved by Byzantine authors, one by Photius and one by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Although we must use caution in drawing firm conclusions about Diodorus' account based on these very late synopses, the two accounts agree closely enough on the major details that way may assume they preserve the sense of the original passage reasonably well.
- 70 Diod. Sic. 34/35.2.4.
- 71 Diod. Sic. 34/5.2.14. Damophilus also appears in Athenaeus' summary of Posidonius' account (Jacoby *FgrHF*7).
- 72 Eunus is much the same, if less developed, in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' synopsis of Diodorus. As in Photius' narrative, Eunus is known among the slaves as a mystic; they approach him to see whether their plan for revolt has the gods' approval and eventually name him king.
- 73 *Verr.* 2.4.112.
- 74 Diod. Sic. 36.3.4.
- 75 E.g., 36.4.4: "... known to be skilled at telling the future, and a flute player at women's religious festivals (δοκοῦντα τῆς ἱεροσκοπίας ἔμπειρον εἶναι καὶ ταῖς γυναικείας θέαις αὐλομανοῦντα)"
- 76 A primary function of the emphasis on magic in the descriptions of Eunus and Salvius is to mark them as non-Roman. On the Roman conception of eastern foreigners in particular as magicians, see Dickie 2001: 124–141.
- 77 Eunus and Salvius receive little attention elsewhere in first century accounts. Cicero references the Second Slave War twice in the speeches against Verres; he mentions Athenion, leader of a band of slaves in Sicily during the revolt, but only briefly (2.3.66).
- 78 Thirty-six fragments of Sallust's narrative of the Spartacus War survive. Fifteen (3.38–45, 64–70 R) are assigned by Ramsey to Book Three; of these, two (3.38 and 3.39) seem to belong to a character sketch of Spartacus. Ramsey assigned the remaining Spartacus fragments, covering the events of 72–71 BCE, to Book Four (4.11–4.31). Fragments 4.14–20 are from a geographical excursus on Sicily, which will be discussed in Chapter Four; the remaining fragments describe Crassus' appointment to the command against Spartacus and the final confrontation between Crassus and Spartacus in 71.
- 79 See Chapter One.
- 80 Diod. Sic. 38/39.21.
- 81 *Verr.* 2.5.5–6, 9–20.
- 82 This fragment is preserved in Arusianus Messius' *Exempla Elocutionum* (p.480 K VII) as an example of the use of *ingens* with the genitive. Kritz, noting the similarity of this remark to Sallust's characterization of Mithridates, assigned this fragment to the introduction of Mithridates to the text. Maurenbrecher assigned this passage to the Spartacus narrative based on its similarity to Plutarch's description of Spartacus (ἡγεμόνας εἵλοντο τρεῖς, ὧν πρῶτος ἦν Σπάρτακος, ἀνὴρ Θρᾷξ τοῦ Μαιδικοῦ γένους, οὐ μόνον φρόνημα μέγα καὶ

- ῥώμην ἔχων, ἀλλὰ καὶ συνέσει καὶ πρώτῃ τῆς τύχης ἀμείνων καὶ τοῦ γένους ἑλληνικώτερος, “They chose three leaders, of whom Spartacus was first, a Thracian man of the Maedi tribe, possessing not only great courage and strength, but also greater than his fortune in intelligence and kindness, and more Hellenic than his people,” Plut. *Crass.* 8.2.). Funari agrees that the fragment is plausibly attributed to a character portrait of Spartacus but argues that the similarity with Plutarch’s passage is not sufficient evidence to assign 3.91 with certainty.
- 83 As Syme 1964: 195–196 points out, Sallust made comparatively judicious use of the character sketch, and contrary to the tradition established by Thucydides, preferred to announce a character’s arrival to the narrative with a portrait rather than marking his death with a characterizing eulogy (cf. Sen. *Suas.* 6.21).
- 84 La Penna 1968: 296.
- 85 La Penna 1968: 296–297.
- 86 While we have several narrative accounts of the Spartacus War by historians, official state records pertaining to the war unfortunately do not survive. The conflict with Spartacus is not recorded in the *fasti consulares* for 73 BCE, but the text for 72 and 71 is lost; all three years are lost from the *fasti triumphales*.
- 87 E.g., McGushin 1994 *ad loc.*: “Words which may be part of a Sallustian character-sketch of Spartacus in which his courage and sense of honor are stressed.”
- 88 This fragment is preserved without book number by Donatus in his commentary on Terence’s *Andria* at line 205 as an example of the use of “triple negatives” (*duae negativae unam consentivam faciunt; tres negativae pro una negativa accipiuntur, ut hic “neque haud non.” Sallustius ...*). Maurenbrecher assigned the fragment to the end of the Spartacus War and followed de Brosse and Kritz in assuming that it describes Spartacus himself. Maurenbrecher cites the similarity of the fragment to the parallel passage Plutarch’s *Life of Crassus*: “At the end, when those around him had fled, he himself, having stood his ground and having been surrounded by many, was killed while still fighting back” (τέλος δὲ φευγόντων τῶν περὶ αὐτόν, αὐτὸς ἐστὼς καὶ κυκλωθεὶς ὑπὸ πολλῶν, ἀμύνόμενος κατεκόπη, *Crass.* 11.10). As La Penna and Funari have observed, the lack of transmitted book number makes the assignment difficult, especially because the narrative suffers no shortage of opportunities for scenes of heroic death in battle. The content itself is not specific enough to challenge Maurenbrecher’s assignment.
- 89 Parallel uses of *inultus* are found in Catiline’s speech to his followers in the *Cat.* and to describe Cotta’s troops in the *Histories*: “Beware lest you die unavenged” (*cavete inulti animam amittatis, Cat.* 58.21); “Disgraced and unavenged, they were being slain from behind by the enemy” (*dedecores inultique terga ab hostibus caedebantur, 3.20 R/3.24 M*).
- 90 “Alcaeus and the other lyric poets of the classical period – that at any rate is Horace’s thought – were buried in oblivion until he resuscitated their songs in his own odes” (Fraenkel 1957: 349).
- 91 *Epod.* 16.41–66; cf. *Hist.* 1.100–103 M. The Blessed Isles are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.
- 92 Fraenkel 1957: 349.
- 93 As with all the speeches and letters of the Sallustian corpus, the degree of authenticity of this speech has been debated. Scholars have been especially eager to see Sallust’s hand at work here because of Marius’ hostility toward the *nobiles*, thought to echo Sallust’s own sentiment. Flower 1996: 17–19 observes that elements of the language and style of the speech

seem to be recognizably Marian and offers the reasonable interpretation that the speech falls somewhere between a wholesale Sallustian creation and a faithful representation of a historical speech.

94 Grethlein 2006.

95 See, e.g., Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2010.

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4 Digressive digressions

Through characters like Sertorius, Pompey, and Spartacus, Sallust reflected on the changing role of historiography under the triumvirate and weighed its future utility and purpose. The aggressive self-fashioning of Sertorius and Pompey echoed that of the triumvirs, particularly Octavian; these figures attempted to leave little room for interpretation or criticism by setting the terms of their own legacies and thus controlling their roles in historical memory. Spartacus, who would have been relegated to historical anonymity without Sallust, offered a counter-example. If Sallust could vindicate a runaway slave from obscurity and fashion him into a leading figure of the *Histories*, perhaps history still had the potential to influence public opinion and memory. The historian's account could thus be a counterweight to those of self-promoting actors. But to what end?

For one thing, written history could serve as a sort of critical thinking laboratory for Sallust's audience; interpreting an allusive history could train the reader to be a better "reader" of history as it was unfolding in real time. As was discussed in [Chapter Two](#), Sallust's analogical method of historiography encourages the reader to be skeptical of "official" narratives and to eschew straightforward, superficial, literal readings in search of more profound truths. Just as readers must untangle Sallust's allusive threads, they should also breakdown the triumvirs' claims and not accept their claims about "restoring the republic" and "ending civil war" uncritically. In this chapter, I will show how Sallust uses two geographical digressions in the *Histories* to build his critique of Octavian. In each case, he does so allusively, through the figure of Pompey. These digressions call attention not only to Pompey's duplicitous and self-interested nature, itself a major contributor to the downfall of the republic, but also to parallels between his career and Octavian's. Octavian demonstrated some of the personal characteristics Sallust found objectionable in Pompey. More alarming were the similarities in their career paths. Both flouted the customary path of the *cursus honorum*, and both recognized that the threat of military force, whether explicit or implicit, was effective leverage against a

defenseless senate.

As was discussed in [Chapter Three](#), it seems certain that Pompey played an important role in the *Histories*, whether or not we agree with Syme's assertion that he was *the* central figure of the text.¹ The *Histories* cover the period of Pompey's rapid rise to power on the strength of his victories against Sertorius, Spartacus, and the pirates, and the quantity of fragments in which Pompeius appears suggests his importance in the *Histories*.² Despite the prevailing hesitance to draw firm conclusions about fragmentary texts, scholars have been remarkably uniform in their assessment of Sallust's animosity toward Pompey. Katz, for example, concludes that "Pompey appears to be the most loathed of Sallust's many loathsome characters."³ Syme agrees: "For malice against Pompeius, the *Historiae* offered opportunity ever and again, gladly taken. The denigration looks like an obsession."⁴ Although the depiction was probably more complex than the scholarship reflects, Sallust's attitude toward Pompey does seem to have been generally negative.

More specifically, Sallust's Pompey reflects elements of Octavian's character and career about which Sallust seems to have been critical. One of Pompey's defining characteristics in the *Histories* is his excessive personal ambition:

modestus ad alia omnia, nisi ad dominationem

(2.18 R/2.17 M)

modest toward all other things, except toward tyranny⁵

This overweening *ambitio* is one of the driving forces of Pompey's early career. Pompey's rapid ascent in the 70s and 60s defied existing Roman power structures, procedures, and customs, much like Octavian's rise to power in the 40s and 30s. Pompey was first elected consul for 70 BCE, although he did not meet the minimum age requirement and had bypassed the traditional steps of the *cursus honorum*.⁶ His career was also marked by irregular military commands. Pompey was granted proconsular *imperium* for the war against Sertorius, although he met none of the requirements for that rank.⁷ His command over the pirates in 67 was technically legal (granted by the passage of the *lex Gabinia*), but the *imperium* granted for the task was unprecedented and alarming.⁸ Furthermore, Pompey's first two triumphs were illegal.⁹ The career Pompey built on these illegitimate early honors inflicted a civil war upon Rome before being truncated on the shores of Alexandria.

At the time of the *Histories*' composition, Sallust and his contemporaries were faced with the consequences of the precedent set by Pompey's exceptional path. Octavian's early career was marked by a similar disregard for law and custom, on both his own part and that of the senate, the members of which were variously motivated by fear, sycophancy, and crass

opportunism. Octavian had learned well from his predecessors and understood that nearly any concession could be obtained from the cowed and weary senate if one's demands were backed by the threat of violence or civil war. Sallust had seen Octavian extort *propraetorian imperium*, senatorial rank, and even the consulship before the age of twenty.¹⁰ The creation of the triumvirate in November 43 further made a mockery of traditional Roman government. The triumvirate was, in spirit, a shared dictatorship. Indeed, its very ratification was illegal. The required waiting period between proposal and enactment was not observed, and the *lex Titia* was enacted the day it was passed.¹¹ However, this measure was met with minimal resistance, because the certain alternative was continued civil strife. Just as the career of Pompey had trampled on traditional structures, at the time Sallust was writing the *Histories*, Octavian and the triumvirs appeared poised to dismantle whatever was left of the republican constitution, and the cowed senate was in no position to object. It was not yet clear how far Octavian's career would extend and how much damage that career would inflict on republican institutions.

Sallust's Pompey is characterized not only by extreme personal ambition, but also by dissimulation. He embodies the discrepancy between pretense and reality to which Sallust so often draws our attention:¹²

oris probi, animo inverecundo

(2.17 R/2.16 M)

he [Pompey] was of an honest face but with a shameless spirit.

Pompey seemed to be *probus* but was in truth *invirecundus*. He made himself to appear one thing; he *was* another. Sallust's interest in this type of antithesis has been made clear in previous chapters. It will be emphasized in the digressions discussed here, as well; for example, in Fragment 4.18 R, a rocky overhang is called "Scylla" because it looks and sounds like a mythological monster, but it is not. The senate denies the threat posed by the Spartacus War, even as the rebel forces crush consular armies. Octavian calls Sextus Pompey a "pirate," although he is a Roman citizen from a distinguished family. As ever in the Sallustian world, representation is at odds with reality and words are at odds with deeds.

In this chapter, I will examine two of the *Histories'* geographical digressions: the excursus on Sicily in Book Four and on the Blessed Isles in Book One. Although Pompey is not an explicit part of the action in either case, each digression implicates him in some way. Both Sertorius and Spartacus played critical roles in Pompey's ascension to the highest stratum of Roman public life; his victories (or, at least, the victories he claimed) in Spain and in the Third Servile War gave Pompey the platform to demand rewards and the right to

stand for office. In doing so, Pompey had unknowingly set a precedent that would be exploited a generation later by another ambitious upstart, the adopted son and heir of Pompey's greatest rival.

Pompey and Octavian are not explicitly named in either the Scylla or the Blessed Isles excursus, but, as we have seen, both are present throughout the *Histories*, whether explicitly or implicitly. Even though Pompey has not yet appeared at the point in Book One where the Blessed Isles are introduced, a reader familiar with Sallust and with some awareness of the *Histories'* subject matter will be anticipating his arrival in the narrative. Likewise, the *Histories'* preoccupation with contemporary politics surely would have been evident by the time the reader made it to the Blessed Isles digression (if, indeed, they hadn't already expected it). Here, I will demonstrate that the digressions on Sicily and the Blessed Isles are *loci* of the comparison between Pompey and Octavian, and that both digressions highlight the danger of Octavian by exploring the implications of Pompey's early career.

Digressions

It is perhaps unfair to call the extended historical, ethnographic, or geographic descriptions in ancient historiography "digressions." At the very least, this conventional term is somewhat misleading, for in some important respects the passages are not "digressions" at all, but rather reiterate and amplify the author's central themes in a different context. For the present discussion, I use "digressions" to refer to those passages that transport the reader outside the main path of a text's historical narrative, whether temporally or geographically. As we shall see, however, I do not mean to imply that these passages are somehow adjunct to the "real" text; in fact, I shall argue that, in the case of Sallust's *Histories*, these "digressions" contain important clues to the overall aims of Sallust's work.

The geographical or ethnographical¹³ digression was a standard feature of ancient historiography by Sallust's day.¹⁴ When the action of a historical narrative shifted to a new location, particularly a distant or exotic one, the historian would often introduce the new setting with an excursus on the region in which he discussed the area's topography, inhabitants, and history.¹⁵ Greek historians frequently employed the geographical or ethnographic excursus as a way of providing context, emphasizing themes, and displaying their own erudition. Herodotus' elaborate descriptions of Egypt (Book 2) and Scythia (Book 4) set a precedent for the historiographical tradition. Thucydides' history contains nothing comparable in scale, but he does give frequent, brief descriptions of geography and topography according to shifts in narrative theater; for example, he gives accounts of the region around the Achelōus

(2.102.2–4), Pylos (4.3), and Sicily (6.2–6). Xenophon's *Anabasis* might be said to function as a large-scale, extended geographical excursus on the journey from Persia back to Greece; Alexander's historians surely also saw the value of the geographical digression as an opportunity to celebrate their patron's conquests.¹⁶ Polybius explicitly commented on the value of geographical description to historical works (3.36–38, 5.21.6, 12.25e.1), and devoted Book 34 (now lost) to the geography of Europe and Africa.

Although we have a less abundant sample of Roman historical writing prior to Sallust, it is clear from what remains that geographical digressions remained part of the historiographical tradition.¹⁷ The Elder Cato and Sisenna, two of Sallust's models, seem to have taken a particular interest in ethnography and geography.¹⁸ Caesar's commentaries do not precisely belong to the historiographical genre, but we may assume Sallust would have been familiar with them. From the opening line of the *Gallic War* (*omnis Gallia ...*), it is apparent that Caesar's mastery of the geography of the conquered regions is central to the text; later in the text, he gives detailed accounts of the territories of the Gauls (4.1–3), Britons (5.13) and the Germans (6.25).¹⁹ In addition to the historiographical tradition of digressions, Sallust may also have been influenced by contemporary authors like Diodorus Siculus who had a more narrowly geographical focus, or eclectics like Posidonius.²⁰

While earlier scholarship tended to focus on their structural function (e.g., providing variety, signaling transitions) or their use as a showcase for the author's experience or erudition,²¹ scholars have generally come to recognize the thematic importance of digressions.²² Regarding digressions in Sallust, Syme observed that an excursus could simply have a structural function.²³ Even in Sallust's slim corpus, we can see that he followed historiographical tradition in composing geographical digressions and that, like his predecessors, he used them to develop and highlight his major themes.²⁴ Although the action of the *Catiline* remains in Italy and thus does not provide fruitful opportunities for geographical excursus, Sallust employs this device in both the *Jugurtha* and the *Histories*. In the *Jugurtha*, upon the division of Micipsa's kingdom between Jugurtha and Adherbal by a Roman commission, Sallust briefly digresses on the geography and history of Africa (*Jug.* 17–19). He describes the topography and climate and discusses the various origins of the region's inhabitants, all standard features of geographical excursus.²⁵ This digression has attracted much attention, and over the course of the twentieth century its treatment followed the trend described above, from the primarily structural²⁶ to the more thematically oriented.²⁷ Morstein-Marx has argued that the digression (in particular, the myth of Numidian origins) serves not only to position the Numidians as an "Other," but also to align them with the Parthians and thus create an analogy with the eastern crisis of Sallust's own day. In this

reading, the digression serves as a link between the narrative world and Sallust's contemporary world; I shall argue that the *Histories'* digressions have a similar function, consistent with the text's overall analogical nature.

The fragmentary status of the *Histories* makes geographical digressions a little more difficult to identify; however, the surviving text contains evidence of at least four geographical digressions. In addition to the two digressions discussed in detail here, Sallust gives an account of Sardinia and Corsica to set the scene for the elder Lepidus' exile and death there following his unsuccessful revolt in 78–77 BCE (2.1–13 R/2.1–13 M). He also includes a digression on the Black Sea region on the eve of Lucullus' siege of Amisus in 71 (3.82–99 R/3.61–80 M). Although these passages are fragmentary, from what remains, we might reasonably conclude that they followed convention: both appear to have discussed the area's geographical position and topography, mythological history, climate, and flora and fauna.

The following discussion focuses on two geographical digressions in the fragments of the *Histories*: Sallust's accounts of the Blessed Isles in Book One and of Sicily in Book Four. Each digression has conventional elements; from the extant lines, we can see that Sallust addressed typical features identified above. In keeping with tradition, we might expect these digressions to have some thematic relevance. However, each of these passages is peculiar in some way. In both cases, Sallust defies the convention that geographical digressions are typically inserted at the point when a narrative shifts geographic theaters; as we shall see, no one goes to either the Blessed Isles or to Sicily. The Blessed Isles digression also represents a temporal digression, as the narrative shifts into the "plupast," taking us back to a time prior to the start of the narrative proper. Sallust's departures from convention invite us to investigate these digressions closely.

I Scylla

Scylla represents an apt image for a civil war narrative. Not only does she represent half of a dangerously divided pair, she herself is a dual entity, a part-woman part-monster hybrid, her body at war with itself.²⁸ During the triumviral period, Scylla was also adopted as a symbol by Sextus Pompey, the son of Pompey Magnus; Sextus used Scylla's image on his coinage to signal his control of Sicily and the sea. I argue here that Sallust uses the figure of Scylla to allude to Sextus in the *Histories*. Through Scylla, Sallust evokes Sextus as part of his allusive critique of tumultuous contemporary politics. Specifically, Sallust invokes Sextus in his account of the Spartacus War in order to highlight similarities between the leader of the slave revolt and the son of Pompey

Magnus. The triumvirs, particularly Octavian, portrayed Sextus as a pirate, thus aligning him with bandits, buccaneers, and other menaces on the outskirts of society. The triumvirs exploited this depiction in order to legitimize their war against Sextus as a justifiable suppression of a piratical uprising rather than a civil war against the popular son of a beloved, lamented Roman figure. As we have seen, one of Sallust's purposes in the *Histories* is to undercut the public image projected by the triumvirs and to expose their pretense of a legal government and a restored *res publica*. In this case, Sallust challenges the triumvirs' public dismissal of Sextus as a mere adventurer or pirate and implies that Sextus posed a graver threat to the triumvirate and the state than the leading figures acknowledged. In order to make this point, Sallust suggests a comparison with Spartacus, another figure who was initially dismissed by contemporary opponents but who posed a very real threat to the stability of the republic, tying up Rome's military strength and draining the public coffers in a protracted struggle.

Recent work by Anton Powell, Kathryn Welch, and others has reassessed the role of Sextus Pompey in the triumphal period.²⁹ This re-evaluation of Sextus is part of a broader scholarly challenge to traditional narratives of the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Principate. The story handed down from antiquity and codified in the modern period by Syme's *Roman Revolution* is compelling in its simplicity and moral clarity. Welch summarizes this position:³⁰

The most commonly accepted paradigm, suggested by Tacitus (*Annales* 1.2) but made canonical by Ronald Syme, was that the already-suspect political class gave up its struggle and quickly became complicit in the imposition of one-man rule upon the Roman State after the death of Gaius Cassius and Marcus Brutus. It is based, firstly, on the assumption that the institutions of the Roman State were already moribund and, secondly, that whatever hope they had was snuffed out at Philippi in 42 BC.³¹

In this telling, there was no Republic left to defend after 42. Those who continued resisting the triumvirs must have been motivated by willful ignorance or greed or revenge, because there was nothing noble left for which to fight.

The piratical Sextus Pompey who emerged from antiquity was thus a historiographical necessity. Since there was no room in this narrative for a genuine and legitimate Republican threat, Sextus had to be characterized differently. Octavian chose to depict Sextus as a pirate.³² This characterization was efficient and effective because it exploited multiple elements of Sextus' identity. First, it reflected Sextus' military methods. His strength was primarily naval; he controlled Sicily and the surrounding waterways by means of his powerful fleet. Furthermore, Sextus' followers allegedly included a significant

number of runaway slaves, freedmen, and others from the margins of society.³³ Sextus' association with such "illegitimate" figures made the accusation of piracy all the more plausible. Second, this characterization struck a blow at Sextus' self-presentation as pious son devoted to the memory of his father. Under the *lex Gabinia* in 67 BCE, the elder Pompey had been granted unprecedented *imperium* to combat the Cilician pirates who menaced the Mediterranean, imperiling both Rome's ambitions for eastern expansion and its grain supply. By accusing Sextus of posing the same kind of threat that Pompey Magnus had so triumphantly eradicated, Octavian challenged Sextus' claim to the ideal of filial *pietas*.³⁴ By the end of Augustus' career, this characterization was fixed:

Mare pacavi a praedonibus. Eo bello servorum qui fugerant a dominis suis et arma contra rem publicam ceperant, triginta fere millia capta dominis ad supplicium sumendum tradidi.

(RGDA 25)

I freed the sea from pirates. During that war, of the slaves who fled their masters and took up arms against the republic, I sent nearly thirty thousand who had been captured back to their masters for punishment.

Sextus need not be identified by name here for Augustus' audience to know exactly to whom this refers; the allusion to pirates and slaves is sufficient.³⁵ This depiction became increasingly entrenched during the imperial period,³⁶ and by the time the *Epitome* of Florus appeared in the early second century CE, Sextus had become a mere caricature (*O quam diversus a patre! Ille Cilicas extinxerat, hic se piratica tuebatur*, "Oh, how different from his father! The elder wiped out the Cilician pirates, the younger supported himself by piracy," Florus 2.18.8).

Despite at least one attempt to rehabilitate Sextus and affirm his important place in the violent transition from republic to principate,³⁷ Syme's characterization of Sextus as a "pirate" or "adventurer" persisted for decades. However, recent discussions have revealed a Sextus who bears little resemblance to the "rebel without a cause" image concocted in antiquity and adopted by earlier scholars. For example, many of the wide-ranging contributions to the 2002 collection *Sextus Pompeius* explore previously unexamined aspects of Sextus' life and career. Especially enlightening are the various analyses of Sextus' own self-presentation, particularly Welch and Powell's discussions of the imagery of his Spanish and Sicilian coinage. In addition, as was discussed above, Welch's 2012 monograph has brought this "new" Sextus Pompey to the fore.

While the high-decibel imperial maligning of Sextus as a pirate and scoundrel has long overwhelmed contradictory voices, Sallust, writing while

Sextus was still alive and actively campaigning, legitimizes Sextus as a threat and invites his reader to interrogate the triumvirs' dissimulation. Specifically, Sallust frames his critique by suggesting a parallel between Sextus and Spartacus, the runaway slave whose revolt was similarly de-legitimized and dismissed by Rome until heavy losses forced the senate to react appropriately. The Spartacus revolt was far more destructive than it had to be, largely because the senate for so long refused to acknowledge that Spartacus was not merely a bandit harrying the countryside, but rather was an effective leader at the head of a surprisingly efficient force. Sallust aligns Sextus with Spartacus to suggest the danger in overlooking Sextus in the same way. Sallust invokes Sextus by employing an image from Sextus' own propaganda: Scylla, the monstrous woman-dog hybrid who guarded the Strait of Messina and Sicily, Sextus' strategic base.

Scylla in the Histories

Scylla and Charybdis appear in the *Histories* as part of the geographical digression on Sicily in Book 4. The digression is part of Sallust's account of the phase of the Spartacus War in which the rebel slaves forced their way down the Italian peninsula to Rhegium. According to Plutarch, Spartacus intended to cross the straits to Sicily, where he would fan the embers of the Second Slave Revolt, extinguished less than a generation previously.³⁸ Three fragments of the digression (4.14–16 R/4.23–25 M) describe the topography of southern Italy, where Spartacus and his followers fought their way to Rhegium. Sallust also tells us that Sicily was once connected to the mainland (4.17 R/4.26 M); we shall return to this fragment shortly.³⁹ The mention of Sicily seems to signal the narrative's arrival at the tip of the peninsula. The next two fragments transport us across the strait of Messina:

Scyllam accolae saxum mari imminens adpellant, simile celebratae formae procul visentibus. Unde et monstrosam speciem fabulae illi dederunt, quasi formam hominis caninis succinctam capitibus, quia conlisi ibi fluctus latratus videntur exprimere

(4.18 R/4.27 M)⁴⁰

The locals call the rock jutting over the sea "Scylla," since to those looking on from a distance it is similar to that famous form. And for this reason they ascribed to it the monstrous appearance of the myth, like the form of a human girded with dog heads, because the breaking waves there seem to imitate barking.

Charybdis, mare verticosum, quo<d> forte inlata navigia sorbens gurgitibus occultis milia XL Tauromenitana ad litora trahit, ubi se laniata navigia fundo emergunt

(4.19 R/4.28 M)⁴¹

Charybdis, a whirling sea, which, when it drinks in ships drawn in by chance, drags them

forty miles to the Tauromenitanian shores with its hidden currents, where the mangled vessels emerge from the sea.

Sallust thus depicts the treacherous channel separating Sicily from mainland Italy. The final fragment of the excursus describes Pelorus, the northeastern promontory of Sicily.⁴²

During the final phase of the Spartacus War, the rebel slaves traveled south through Campania and Lucania, perhaps with an eye toward crossing over to Sicily.⁴³ It would not be surprising, then, for Sallust to include a digression on the geography of Sicily as the action of the text shifted thence, just as he had done, for example, regarding Africa in the *Jugurtha*. However, the rebel slaves never made it to Sicily, and so the action of the *Histories* never actually arrives there.⁴⁴ Spartacus and the detachment with him were cut off and defeated by Crassus in Bruttium, while the remaining runaways were finished off by Pompey. If the narrative never arrives in Sicily, why does Sallust go out of his way to orient us there?

Given the *Histories'* preoccupation with contemporary affairs, if something seems out of place in the context of narrative time (a Sicilian digression when the action is not traveling to Sicily), we would do well to look for an explanation in the context of compositional time. Sallust's description of the topographic history of the region subtly reminds Sallust's reader that, whatever the explicit topic at hand, civil war is never far in the background. He highlights the divided nature of the region, and the violence with which nature tore apart the land masses:

Nam olim Italiae Siciliam coniunctam constat fuisse, sed medium spatium aut per humilitatem obrutum est aut per angustiam scissum. Ut autem curvum sit facit natura mollioris Italiae, in quam asperitas et altitudo Siciliae aestum relidit

(4.17 R/4.26 M)

It is common knowledge for a while that Sicily was once joined to Italy, but the connecting span was either submerged where it was low or torn asunder where it was narrow. Moreover, the the softer nature of Italy made its coast curved, since the roughness and height of Sicily thrusts the tide back against it.

Sallust thus describes the separation of Sicily and mainland Italy. It is framed as a geological "civil war," with emphasis on the violence of the split (*obrutum ... scissum*).⁴⁵ Furthermore, the references to Scylla and Charybdis in 4.18 and 4.19 emphasize that this separation is not benign. The channel between the divided bodies threatens danger from both sides and attempts to navigate between the opposing sides are treacherous.

The careful reader, then, is now primed for allusions to civil war in this excursus; the appearance of Scylla gives the reader a further clue to the

particular conflict lurking in this digression. When Sallust was writing the *Histories*, the figure of Scylla had become closely associated with Sextus Pompey.

Scylla and Sextus Pompey

Between the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE and Octavian's victory over Mark Antony at Actium in 31, the intensity of open warfare was nearly matched by the battles of iconography. Major players on all sides, including Sextus Pompey, used coinage and other media to compete for public support and lay claim to the republican ideals of *pietas* and *cura rei publicae*. Sextus' coinage from the pre-Misenum period focuses primarily on the memory of his father, Pompey Magnus. In his later issues, however, Sextus highlights his mastery of the sea. In particular, Sextus emblazons at least two of his coins with the figure of Scylla (*RRC* 511/2 and 511/4). By using Scylla's image, Sextus commemorated his victories over Octavianic fleets off the promontory of Scyllaeum in 42 and 38 BCE⁴⁶ and trumpeted his control of the strait separating Italy and Sicily. Sextus' use of Scylla might also address his reputation in triumviral propaganda as the *Siculus pirata*. Rather than protest Octavian's characterization of him as such, Sextus seems to embrace it, and to use the image to announce himself as the greatest force on the high seas. These coins, and thus this association between Sextus and Scylla, would have been in circulation at the time Sallust was writing the *Histories*. To a reader who has recognized Sallust's method of historical analogy, the out-of-place Sicilian digression and mention of Scylla would signal an allusion to Sextus.

Given the persistence in both ancient literary accounts and modern scholarship of the Augustan portrait of Sextus as a mere adventurer and a pirate, Sextus' coinage provides us an invaluable perspective. Not only do these coins speak in a contemporary, non-triumviral voice otherwise unavailable to us, they also give us our closest look at Sextus' own program of public self-fashioning. According to Crawford, Sextus' earliest issues were minted in Spain in the fall of 45 BCE.⁴⁷ The imagery of these early coins is focused on the memory of Sextus' father, Pompey Magnus, and they frequently feature the slogan *Pietas*.⁴⁸ Sextus also issued coins with the image of his older brother, who had been executed after Munda.⁴⁹ The emphasis on the senior Pompey and *pietas* was intended to help Sextus legitimize his claim to the family legacy and, in turn, his place in the rapidly shifting balance of power back in Rome.⁵⁰

Sextus left Spain and arrived in Sicily sometime in late 43 BCE. In the intervening years, he was declared *praefectus classis et orae maritimae* by the senate, amassed an impressive navy, and, after the passage of the *lex Titia*, was

proscribed by the triumvirs. In Sicily, he earned the support of the Roman people and the unmitigated loathing of the triumvirs by offering refuge to other targets of the proscriptions.⁵¹ Much of Sextus' Sicilian coinage features the same motifs which characterized the Spanish issues, particularly the emphasis on *pietas* and Sextus' family connections.⁵² Sextus' coins from 43 onward also reflect his new geographical stronghold and his increasing dominance of the sea. These coins are noteworthy for their "local flavor," depicting figures from Sicilian mythology and naval imagery. For example, *RRC* 511/3a-c show Amphinomos and Anapios, the Sicilian brothers who carried their parents to safety from the erupting Mt. Etna. This scene does double iconographic duty by invoking the ideal of filial *pietas* as well as emphasizing Sextus' Sicilian connection.⁵³ As Powell has observed, it is easy to dismiss this imagery as pandering to local supporters or a simple statement of his new location. However, we should avoid the temptation to do so, because these coins repay closer consideration.⁵⁴ A brief examination of Sextus' Scylla coins will show how Sextus employed Scylla's image and why Sallust's audience would have made the connection between the two.

Sextus' adoption of Scylla as a symbol can be seen clearly in at least two examples, *RRC* 511/2 and 511/4. Both were minted in Sicily; Crawford dates them to between 42 and 40 BCE, while Powell suggests downdating by several years, as I discuss. Contrary to Crawford's dismissal of Sextus' use of iconography as "hackneyed," the imagery of these two issues is complex.⁵⁵ 511/2 depicts Neptune on the obverse and a naval trophy on the reverse. Scylla's dogs form part of the trophy, along with a trident, anchor, and decorative *aplustre*. Around the border is the title Sextus had received in 43 BCE: *praefectus classis et orae maritimae ex senatus consulto*. The image of Scylla on 511/4 is even more striking – literally. The *pharos* on the obverse of 511/4 has been identified as that of Messina; a victorious, decorated warship lies before the beacon. However, the real star of this issue is Scylla herself. She appears on the reverse, fiercely posed, wielding the prow of a ship over her head and evidently about to smash it on her rocks.

Sextus frequently casts himself as the son of Neptune (as seen on 511/2), at once claiming a divine lineage and alluding to his famous (mortal) father's domination of the sea.⁵⁶ The appearance of Scylla is more unexpected. During the triumviral period everyone, it seems, claimed to enjoy the special favor of the gods, but the invocation of a mythical monster as patron was unparalleled.⁵⁷ Modern scholars have been underwhelmed by Sextus' use of imagery on his coinage (see Crawford's evaluation above), but, as Powell argues, there is a more complex network of ideas at work than scholars have been willing to acknowledge: "It might be thought that with these Sicilian references Sextus was merely making commonplace political moves, such as

alluding to his power base; conciliating local, Sicilian, opinion; reminding potential recruits from the mainland of where he was. However, the message of these coins went deeper.”⁵⁸ The message goes deeper indeed, and it is aimed squarely at Sextus’ rival Octavian.

Some scholars have attempted to connect the Scylla coins to specific naval victories over Octavian or his lieutenants. As I have mentioned, Crawford dated both *denarii* to 42–40 BCE. In 42, Sextus defeated the forces under Octavian’s lieutenant Salvidienus Rufus near Scyllaeum.⁵⁹ Although Salvidienus was able to repel Sextus from the mainland at Rhegium, Sextus regrouped and drove the triumviral fleet off Sicily.⁶⁰ According to Dio, Sextus was gleeful at this victory, and Crawford imagined that the Scylla *denarii* might have been commissioned in its commemoration.⁶¹ More recently, Powell has suggested a date range as late as 39–36. Like Crawford’s, this range can also be attached to a specific defeat of Octavian’s forces. In 38, Octavian’s fleet was nearly destroyed off Scyllaeum by a storm; Sextus’ navy was largely unaffected, thanks to the foresight of Menas.⁶² Although it was a stretch to declare this natural disaster a military victory, Sextus exploited the destruction of Octavian’s fleet as proof of Neptune’s favor.⁶³ Accordingly, Powell suggests, we might understand a link between the Scylla coins and Sextus’ “victory” in 38.

For the present discussion, it is not necessarily crucial to assign these *denarii* firmly to either Crawford or Powell’s date range, or to tie their production to one victory or the other. What matters in this context is that there are multiple ways in which these coins might be aimed at Octavian. In addition to celebrating his naval successes, Sextus’ use of Scylla as a symbol may have served another general purpose: to respond to his depiction in Octavian’s propaganda. Sextus and Octavian seem to have been keenly aware of each other’s public relations strategies and to have countered them with their own messages. For example, their rivalry manifested itself in competing claims to the ideal of *pietas*. This was a key component of Sextus’ public image from the start; as was discussed above, much of his coinage focused on the memory of his father and brother, and his Spanish coinage indicates that he adopted *Pius* as a cognomen early on.⁶⁴ *Pietas* was also central to Octavian’s identity, especially during the early years of the triumviral period.⁶⁵ Zanker suggests that we might read 511/3, the Catanaean brothers coin, as a pointed “jab” at Octavian.⁶⁶ In between the heroic brothers stands a statue of a triumphant figure with his foot victoriously on the prow of a ship; Crawford calls him Neptune, while Zanker and Powell identify the figure as Pompey Magnus. The head of the elder Pompey is on the obverse. The imagery thus simultaneously celebrates Sextus’ naval superiority and his claim to filial piety, a one-two punch at the adopted son of Caesar. The message, it seems, was not lost on

Octavian. After defeating Sextus at Naulochus, Octavian issued coins depicting a victory statue of himself in an identical pose to that on 511/3; instead of a rostrum, Octavian props his foot on the globe. Zanker argues that the resemblance is intentional: “Against this background the victory monument erected by or for Octavian takes on the character of a polemic in answer to Sextus’s earlier propaganda.”⁶⁷ In light of this apparently dialogic relationship, it seems probable that Sextus would also respond to Octavian’s depiction of him as a pirate. By aligning himself with Scylla, Sextus acknowledges and even elevates Octavian’s characterization. Sextus seems to scoff: Pirate? That’s all you’ve got? You have *no idea* how much trouble I can cause at sea.

In the late 40s and early 30s, Sicily belonged to Sextus. His coinage was designed to advertise this fact. In addition to other Sicilian motifs, Sextus featured Scylla prominently; he thus aligned himself with the mythological monster who guarded his territory. The visual force of her image, especially on 511/4, combined with the novelty of the use of a monster in propaganda, would have made Scylla an effective and memorable “mascot” for Sextus, and her image would thus have called Sextus to the minds of a triumviral audience.

We can now see that, for Sallust’s readers in the early 30s, Scylla’s image was closely associated with that of Sextus Pompey. As was discussed above, Sallust’s reference to Scylla is found in the digression on Sicily in his account of the Spartacus War. As was also discussed above, there was no narrative or generic necessity for the inclusion of the Sicilian digression. Why, then, does Sallust go out of his way to include it?

Sextus Pompey and Spartacus

One was a Roman citizen of noble birth, the other a runaway gladiator of Thracian origin. Despite the profound difference in status, Sextus and Spartacus are not an unlikely pair. Both figures have suffered greatly from compelling but anachronistic and oversimplified representations. Sallust uses this pair to call attention to the dangerous discrepancy between appearance and reality, a recurring concern in the Sallustian world which is evoked in Fragment 4.18 in multiple ways. The fragment, again:

Scyllam accolae saxum mari imminens adpellant, simile celebratae formae procul visentibus. Unde et monstruosam speciem fabulae illi dederunt, quasi formam hominis caninis succinctam capitibus, quia conlisi ibi fluctus latratus videntur exprimere

(4.18 R/4.27 M)

The locals call the rock jutting over the sea “Scylla,” since to those looking on from a distance it is similar to that famous form. And for this reason they ascribed to it the monstrous appearance of the myth, like the form of a human girded with dog heads, because the breaking waves there seem to imitate barking.

Sallust tells us that the cliff Scylla is so named because it looks and sounds deceptively like something it is not. Furthermore, the figure for which the cliff is named is not itself real, but mythological. This passage also evokes the conflict between appearance and reality when read in light of Sallust's allusion to Sextus in his narrative of the Spartacus War. By placing an allusion to Sextus (in the form of Scylla) in his account of the Spartacus War, Sallust invites a comparison between the two figures. Both Spartacus and Sextus Pompey presented a graver threat to the status quo than opponents were initially willing to acknowledge. In the case of Spartacus, this denial, whether based in genuine ignorance or stubborn arrogance, came at a high cost.

The Spartacus War, stretching from 73 to 71 BCE, dragged on at such length and at such cost because it was initially dismissed as a *latrocinium* – something illegitimate, something that did not warrant a strong response. The Spartacus War began in 73 BCE when some 200 captives escaped from a gladiatorial school in Capua.⁶⁸ The initial Roman response to the revolt was not energetic. Appian tells us that not just the first, but the first *two* contingents sent against Spartacus were disorganized, cobbled-together motley crews, because “the Romans did not consider this a war yet, but a raid, something like banditry (οὐ γάρ πω Ῥωμαῖοι πόλεμον, ἀλλ’ ἐπιδρομήν τινα καὶ ληστηρίῳ τὸ ἔργον ὅμοιον ἡγοῦντο εἶναι).”⁶⁹ To some extent, we can understand why this revolt might not have seemed like a top priority in 73 BCE. The young Pompey and a large contingent of Roman forces were currently occupied with Sertorius in Spain and the city itself was troubled by unrest. However, this miscalculation is more surprising in light of the memory of the First and Second Slave Wars in Sicily (135–132 and 104–100 BCE); the suppression of neither had been a simple task. In the First Slave War, the rebel slaves led by Eunus and Cleon defeated several Roman forces (including consular armies led by Lucius Calpurnius Piso and Publius Rupilius) and effectively took possession of Sicily for several years.⁷⁰ The Second Slave War was equally destructive and embarrassing for the Romans, as once again Sicily fell into the hands of rebel slaves for several years.⁷¹

The Roman senate seems to have learned little from its costly experiences with slave revolts, and, as Appian describes, assumed that the uprising led by Spartacus could be easily suppressed by a small force. In 73, Spartacus and his followers soundly defeated the detachments led by Varinius Glaber and Publius Valerius, one right after the other.⁷² At last, the senate began to take the revolt seriously.⁷³ Two consular armies were dispatched and defeated.⁷⁴ Appian claims that the rebels' numbers had increased to 70,000 followers and that the conflict had evoked such fear that the Roman elite, traditionally title-loving power-mongers, avoided elected office lest they be the next to lead an army to defeat at the hands of Spartacus.⁷⁵ Humiliated and overmatched, the

senate promoted Crassus to command and ordered the consuls to stand down.⁷⁶ By the time the combined forces of Crassus and Pompey crushed the revolt in 71, Rome was exhausted both by the human casualties and by the financial drain. One might excuse the underwhelming initial response to the rebellion, but by continuing to dismiss the war as a mere skirmish with gladiators and slaves, the senate allowed the war to escalate unnecessarily.

Just as the senate dismissed the threat posed by Spartacus, Octavian desperately wanted to convince the Roman public that Sextus Pompey was a scoundrel and – of course – a pirate, and that this was impertinent rabble-rousing, not a civil war. Although Octavian must have privately realized, at least to some extent, the threat posed by Sextus' combination of popularity, naval power, and some thirty thousand followers, he publicly sought to delegitimize and minimize Sextus and his forces. The most famous statement to this effect is, of course, Augustus' proclamation in the *RGDA* that he "freed the sea from pirates." Published at the end of Augustus' life, the *RGDA* probably gives us some insight to how Octavian depicted Sextus in the 40s and early 30s, but it is an admittedly late source. Accordingly, we should also turn to earlier sources for further evidence that Octavian portrayed Sextus this way during the course of their conflict (and thus during Sallust's lifetime).

Although it survives to us in only a few fragments, Octavian's 13-book autobiography surely contains clues about Octavian's contemporary depiction of Sextus. These memoirs were composed sometime after Actium (and thus after Sextus' death),⁷⁷ but still represent a chronologically closer source to the *Histories* than the *RGDA*. Scholars generally agree that Octavian's autobiography was apologetic and defensive.⁷⁸ Powell has argued that this accounts in part for its failure to survive antiquity intact. No one was terribly interested, it seems, in reading 13 books of self-justification, and future generations found little drama in a story they knew had a happy ending.⁷⁹ Octavian's conflict with Sextus Pompey was one of the thornier periods in his early career from an autobiographical perspective. There were embarrassing military losses to explain away. For a "pirate," Sextus had proved a formidable and organized enemy, and the triumviral victory was not inevitable. Furthermore, despite Octavian's best efforts, until the end Sextus had still enjoyed a privileged place in the Roman public imagination. He inherited his father's popularity, and the Roman people more readily blamed their ills on Octavian, who struggled to create a likeable public persona, than on Sextus.⁸⁰ Lastly, by the early 30s, the Roman public had no more appetite for civil war. A war between the adoptive son of Julius Caesar and the son of Pompey Magnus had the ugly appearance of a resumption of the civil war of the 40s.

Octavian needed to do damage control in the memoirs. He needed to make his victories look impressive and justify his defeats, and at the same time

maintain the farce that the conflict with Sextus was not a civil war, but rather the necessary suppression of an uprising of pirates and slaves. Powell works backwards from the narrative of Appian, who presumably used the memoirs as a source, to identify episodes from the memoirs in which Octavian embellished, exaggerated, or otherwise distorted his account in order to justify his actions and gloss over his failures.⁸¹ Thus, Octavian's defeat at Scyllaeum in 38 is in no way disgraceful, but rather becomes an example of Octavian's personal bravery,⁸² dedication to his men⁸³ and divine favor.⁸⁴ Likewise, in Octavian's telling, his loss to Sextus at Tauromenium in 36 becomes a triumphant tale of harrowing escape aided by the gods.⁸⁵ Sextus' victory is not attributed to any military capability; on the contrary, he is accused of being "inexperienced in warfare."⁸⁶ If we accept Powell's argument that the memoirs were a main source for Appian's account of these episodes, it follows that Appian's unfavorable depiction of Sextus was probably influenced by Octavian's contemporary, dismissive characterization of Sextus.

Horace's *Epodes* are another source of near-contemporary evidence that Sextus was depicted as a scofflaw or buccaneer around the time Sallust was writing the *Histories*. Like the memoirs of Octavian, the majority of the *Epodes* are probably post-Actian, but not much later.⁸⁷ However, as in the case of the memoirs, the *Epodes* probably reflect rhetoric which had been current for some time, and so contribute to our picture of Octavian's depiction of Sextus during their conflict.

The ninth *Epode* was written in celebration of Octavian's victory at Actium. Horace, addressing Maecenas, muses about when and how they will celebrate Octavian's defeat of Antony, and whether that celebration will resemble the one held after Octavian's win over Sextus Pompey at Naulochus five years prior:

ut nuper, actus cum freto Neptunius
dux fugit ustis navibus,
minatus Urbi vincla quae detraxerat
servis amicus perfidis. (*Epod.* 9.7–10)

Just as recently, when the Neptunian leader, driven from the strait, fled in his burned-out ships, having threatened the city with chains which he, as a friend, had dragged off his treacherous slaves.

Sextus is not explicitly named here, but as in the case of the *RGDA*, the reference is transparent. *Neptunius dux* is a clear allusion to Sextus' self-identification as the son of Neptune.⁸⁸ Horace's Sextus resembles the Sextus of the memoirs and the *Res Gestae* insofar as he travels on the periphery of society. His followers are described as treacherous slaves (*servis ... perfidis*).⁸⁹ *Vincla* probably refers metaphorically to the famine by which Sextus held the

city hostage by blockading the coast and preventing the passage of grain ships, but it also emphasizes Sextus' servile nature by evoking the chains by which captives were bound. Not only does Horace reflect Octavian's general depiction of Sextus as a pirate, he also seems to acknowledge the association between Sextus and Scylla. The *fretum* from which Sextus was driven in line 7 is the strait between Sicily and Italy, the waterway protected by Scylla and Charybdis. In this telling, Sextus was not driven away from Sicily or out of the sea (equally viable ways of depicting Sextus' flight after Naulochus). Horace specifically invokes the strait over which Sextus and Octavian clashed in both combat and propaganda. The poet is clearly familiar with Octavian's rhetoric, and echoes it here.⁹⁰

The near-contemporary evidence thus confirms what the later sources suggest: the young Octavian sought to discredit Sextus Pompey publicly by depicting him as a despicable pirate operating on the lawless edge of society. Octavian tried to convince the Roman populace that Sextus was a menace and a nuisance, but not necessarily a threat to the republic or the triumvirate.

Analogy

By pairing Sextus with Spartacus, Sallust draws our attention to the danger of this deception. Sallust's allusion to Sextus in his account of the Spartacus War recognizes that Sextus, like Spartacus, posed a greater threat to the stability of the republic than contemporary opponents were willing to admit. The juxtaposition of these two figures is calculated to draw the reader's attention to Octavian's dissimulation, and to suggest that his contemporaries should not accept the triumviral party line uncritically. If Octavian's claim that Sextus was a pirate did not bear up to scrutiny, what of his other claims? In particular, after the many terrifying months of proscriptions and land confiscations, triumviral pretensions of "restoring the republic" were increasingly dubious. On a practical level, there was little that Sallust's readers could do to intervene; indeed, Octavian had carried on hostilities with Sextus in the face of public opposition.

If we extend Sallust's analogy and consider the outcome of the Spartacus War, the implications are more chilling yet (at least from Sallust's perspective). The Spartacus War was an important step in the meteoric rise of the young Pompey. His victories over Sertorius in Spain and then over the rebel slaves elevated the elder Pompey to fame and authority beyond his years, which culminated in the unprecedented *imperium* granted to Pompey by the *lex Gabinia* in 67 for the purpose of clearing the sea of pirates. Sallust's analogy between Spartacus and Sextus Pompey suggests that a victory over Sextus might elevate Octavian to the same kind of individual power that Pompey

Magnus enjoyed from the late 70s through the 50s, a concentrated power of which Sallust was deeply critical. For Sallust, the rise of a sole ruler (whether Octavian, Sextus, Antony, or someone else) was a frightening proposition, because the last several decades had shown that the concentration of power in the hands of one individual did not bring the end of civil war, it just rearranged the cast of characters.

Thus, for Sallust, the civil war between Octavian and Sextus Pompey could have no happy outcome for Rome. On the one hand, Octavian's dissimulation about the threat posed by Sextus was dangerous because it created the risk of the war becoming more destructive and costly than it needed to be. It also constituted an element of the elaborate fiction of a *res publica constituta* perpetuated by the triumvirs, a fiction Sallust sought to make transparent. On the other hand, the alternative was perhaps even more frightening. If Octavian did indeed take the war with Sextus seriously and devote himself to defeating him, Octavian could use his victory over "the pirates" to elevate him to exceptional individual power, just as Pompey Magnus had done in the 60s. For Sallust, the war between Octavian and Sextus Pompey could thus lead only to continued civil strife or the autocracy of the eventual victor.

But what if Octavian had not become so powerful so quickly? What if the constitutional structures (e.g., age minimums, regulations on *imperium*) that had been developed to prevent just such a coup had functioned as intended? Octavian may have been the final man to abuse the tattered republican system in order to gain individual preeminence, but he certainly was not the first (not even in living memory). Sallust's choice of subject for the *Histories* – the time from the death of Sulla in 78 up to some unknown point in the 60s – meant that Pompey's early career was inevitably a focal point of the work. Pompey had trampled on law and custom during his rise to power, inadvertently providing a model for Octavian. In what follows, I examine a particular moment in Pompey's life that had a significant impact on the trajectory of his career: his campaign against Sertorius. Without his victory in Spain, what path might Pompey's career have taken? Could he possibly have been forestalled? And what might Sallust's contemporaries learn from this example?

II The Blessed Isles

In Book One of the *Histories*, Sallust introduces Sertorius to the narrative with a character sketch and a flashback. Although the *Histories'* narrative proper begins in 78 BCE, Sallust rewinds the story of Sertorius to the late 80s and Sertorius' flight from Rome to Spain after the deaths of Marius and Cinna (1.78–81 R/1.90–94 M). In 81, after repeated brushes with death in a short

period, a weary Sertorius plotted his escape to the Blessed Isles, distant islands on the edge of the known world where a Golden Age was underway. Sallust appears to have included a geographical excursus on these Blessed Isles (1.87–90 R/1.100–103 M). Although the content of the digression is in some respects conventional, its very existence is surprising. Not only does Sertorius never travel to the Blessed Isles, he never even attempts to; they remain only the object of fantasy, and a fleeting one at that. Sallust has thus strained convention in two ways to include this digression. By “flashing back” to Sertorius’ earlier career, including the Blessed Isles episode, he extends his chronological scope beyond the main framework of the *Histories*. He also contrives to include an excursus on a location where no one actually goes. Given that Sallust has gone so far out of his narrative way to include it, it seems clear that this digression serves a deeper historiographical purpose. I propose that Sallust composed the Blessed Isles excursus in the spirit of “what if ?” or counterfactual history. Read in this way, the digression becomes a thought-exercise in hypothetical outcomes: Sertorius did not travel to the Isles, but *what if he had?* What if the war with Sertorius had ended in 81? Without his triumph (both literal and figurative) over Sertorius, would Pompey’s career have continued on such an exceptional track?

For Sallust, this is far from idle musing. Pompey’s career defied the *cursus honorum* and the traditional allotment of commands and honors and set a precedent for the rise of dangerously ambitious men like the triumvirs, who circumvented existing structures to create their office and powers. The digression on Sertorius and the Blessed Isles raises the possibility that this was a moment when Pompey could – and should – have been restrained. If Sertorius had indeed escaped, Pompey would not have been granted a triumph for victory in Spain – he might well have never been called to Spain at all. From here, we might wonder whether Pompey’s subsequent career might have followed a more ordinary path and might *not* have culminated in a civil war. In turn, had Pompey not paved the way for him, might Octavian have encountered greater resistance on his astonishing rise to the highest stratum of Roman politics?

Ultimately, I suggest, Sallust raises this possibility only to dismiss it. Just as Sertorius considers an escape to the Blessed Isles but eventually is forced to face the realities of war, Sallust’s readers are invited to consider the possibility of an alternative history but are, in the end, confronted with the reality that Pompey and Octavian are just two iterations of Rome’s timelessly self-destructive nature. Perhaps Pompey paved the way for Octavian, but if Pompey himself had not done so, another ambitious and grasping character probably would have; and if Octavian himself had not followed in those footsteps, someone else would have stepped in and done the same. In this case,

the *Histories*' value yet again appears to be not in promoting a futile and doomed resistance movement, but rather in preparing Sallust's readers to live with integrity and think critically under an autocratic regime.

What follows is a thought experiment, perhaps even my own exercise in "what-if?" thinking. *What if* the Blessed Isles episode is an example of counterfactual history? What interpretive possibilities does that open up to us, and what might it suggest about the program of the *Histories* as a whole? While this application of a counterfactual reading is, to some extent, speculative, I believe this thought experiment is worthwhile; it may shed light not only on this compelling but unexpected and perplexing episode and its role in the *Histories*, but also may lead us closer to the overarching purpose of this elusive text.

The islands

Our most complete account of Sertorius' near-retirement to the Blessed Isles is found in Plutarch's *Life of Sertorius*. In 81 B.C., after barely escaping an attack by Sulla's agent C. Annius Luscus and a violent ten-day storm, Sertorius encountered a group of sailors who had just returned from the Atlantic Islands, also known as the "Blessed Isles."⁹¹ These islands were reported to be a natural paradise, where the weather was mild and the earth fertile, located far off the coast of Africa on the very edge of the known world (1.88 R/1.100 M). According to Plutarch, upon hearing the sailors' description of the islands, Sertorius "was seized with an amazing desire to dwell in the islands and live in quiet, freed from tyranny and wars that would never end."⁹² Sertorius did not, of course, act upon this desire; after a brief excursion to Africa, he returned to Spain at the request of the Lusitanians, who sought him as their leader (*Sert.*10.1).

Four fragments of this section of Sallust's narrative survive:

more humanae cupidinis ignara visendi⁹³

(1.87 R/1.103 M)

... out of the habit of human desire for visiting unknown things

Quas duas insulas propinquas inter se et decem <milia> stadium a Gadibus sitas constabat suoapte ingenio alimenta mortalibus gignere⁹⁴

(1.88 R/1.100 M)

It was well known that these two neighboring islands, situated ten thousand stades from Gades, produced food for humans entirely by their own accord.

Secundum philosophos elysium est insulae fortunatae, *quas* ait Sallustius *inclitas esse Homeri carminibus*

According to philosophers, Elysium is the “Fortunate Isles,” which Sallust said are famous from the songs of Homer.

Traditur fugam in Oceani longinqua agitavisse⁹⁵

(1.90 R/1.102 M)

He is said to have been planning flight into distant parts of the Ocean.

From these fragments, we can assume that Sallust gave an account of the Blessed Isles episode, although it is difficult to determine the scope of that account. Plutarch’s detailed treatment, however, suggests that the episode was an important one in the *Histories*.⁹⁶ While the biographer may have augmented his account of the Isles with details from another source (probably Poseidonius), Sallust was a main source for his *Life of Sertorius*.⁹⁷ Accordingly, due to the episode’s prominence in Plutarch’s biography,⁹⁸ scholars have been unanimous in their conjecture that Sertorius’ near-flight to the Blessed Isles was an important point in the *Histories*.

Scholars have also generally agreed that, while the Blessed Isles episode may well have been an actual event in the life of Sertorius, the account in the *Histories* was at least in part a Sallustian literary creation.⁹⁹ It seems unlikely that Sallust invented the episode wholesale, as wanting to cultivate an association with a mythological location would be consistent with other aspects of Sertorius’ self-presentation.¹⁰⁰ However, it is probable that Sallust’s hand is evident here, at least to some extent. Various cases have been made for what might have been at stake for Sallust in fabricating or augmenting such a tale. For example, Katz suggests that the digression is an extended Homeric allusion,¹⁰¹ while García Moreno sees Sallust casting Sertorius as an ideal hero-ruler in the Cynic-Stoic tradition.¹⁰² Others have argued that Sallust’s portrayal of Sertorius’ desire to move to the Isles of the Blessed simply may have been a reflection of Sallust’s own escape fantasy borne of cynicism, exhaustion, and hopelessness.¹⁰³ Although the specific interpretations differ, what they generally agree on is that, while the islands may well have already been part of the Sertorius story by the time Sallust composed the *Histories*, Sallust has appropriated them here for his own purposes.¹⁰⁴

While scholars have proposed numerous interpretations for this digression, none have noted the peculiarity of its very existence. This is, perhaps, unsurprising, since the excursus seems to have been conventional in content. Sallust locates the islands geographically, notes their natural abundance of food, and gives their mythological pedigree (they are to be identified with Homer’s Elysium). However, the Blessed Isles digression departs from convention in two primary ways: geographical and chronological. The

geographical problem with Sallust's inclusion of a Blessed Isles digression is that Sertorius and the action of the narrative never actually travel to the islands. They are a futile daydream for Sertorius. He is intrigued by the sailors' description of paradise but is brought back to earth by the pragmatic Cilicians (who aided him in his attempt to take the island Pityussa from Annius); these career pirates are nonplussed at the idea of eternal peace and depart in search of conflict and profit. Sertorius abandons the fantasy and sails for Africa, and none of our sources mentions the Blessed Isles again. It is surprising for a historian as meticulous as Sallust to devote space to a detailed excursus on a location that appears only tangentially relevant to his account. This device is more typically invoked in narrative historiography when people actually *go there*, as was described above: Herodotus' Cambyzes attacks Egypt, Sallust's Jugurthine War is waged in Africa, Tactius' Vespasian and Titus sack Jerusalem.

The chronological leap required by Sallust to include the Blessed Isles digression also suggests that it holds greater historiographical relevance. The episode is set in 81 BCE, outside the main chronological scope of the *Histories* (78–67 BCE). It is thus in the past of the narrative past, or, as Grethlein and Krebs dubbed it, the “plupast.”¹⁰⁵ Its inclusion in a historical work is not mandatory, nor are there strict conventions about what prior events are worth recall. Far from just providing background information or context, the plupast is fertile ground for meta-historical reflection, and provides us insight to the historian's themes, aims, and priorities.¹⁰⁶ Because of their analogical nature and dual emphasis on narrative and compositional time, the *Histories* have already blurred the line between past and present. Sallust's dip into the plupast is well-suited to a work characterized by temporal disruption. Given that the Blessed Isles are thus out of place both chronologically and geographically, it is reasonable to ask what is at stake in including this digression. I suggest that it functions as an exercise in “what if?” (or counterfactual) history.

“What if?” history

Counterfactual history is, in the simplest terms, the practice of asking “*what if*?”¹⁰⁷ What if Abraham Lincoln had not gone to the theater that night? What if Hitler had found success as a young artist? To judge from the diverse representations of counterfactual thinking in various media, from TV series and plays¹⁰⁸ to novels¹⁰⁹ and blogs,¹¹⁰ and the popularity of time-travel entertainment more generally, this mode of historical exploration has broad appeal. This is unsurprising. We are naturally curious about the past and its causes, and we often employ this kind of thinking in our own lives.¹¹¹ For many, especially those who are in some way dissatisfied with the current state

of affairs, the idea that events are not inevitable or predestined is appealing; if things could have turned out differently in the past, we can cling to hope that they might turn out differently – and that we might choose to act differently – in the future.¹¹²

Scholars have greeted counterfactual history with a more lukewarm reception than has the general public.¹¹³ Its proponents have made the case that, when thoughtfully deployed, counterfactual history can be a useful interpretive lens. The consideration of alternative histories denies the notion of inevitability and frees us from the interpretive constraints of hindsight.¹¹⁴ Counterfactual history can also offer us the closest thing possible to a historical “do-over.” Although it is impossible to turn back the clock and have another go at the past, the contemplation of alternative outcomes can be a useful exercise in preparing us to act better – or at least differently – next time.¹¹⁵ I suggest that this contemplation of alternative paths is a central function of the Blessed Isles episode. If we understand what factors contributed to Pompey’s rise, Sallust suggests, we are better prepared to break the pattern should it present itself again (as it most surely had, in the person of Octavian). Evans suggests that, more often than not, the subtext of “What if?” is “If only ...”; in this formulation, counterfactual history is more an exercise in wishful thinking than a valid theoretical approach.¹¹⁶ This criticism-and its corollary, that counterfactuals tell us more about the authors’ present than the narrative past¹¹⁷- are not obstacles in the present discussion, for it is Sallust’s worldview we seek to understand.¹¹⁸ Our task here is not necessarily to interpret the “actual” history of the 70s and 60s, but rather Sallust’s version of it, and, in turn, what that version has to say about the triumviral period. Sallust’s wishful thinking, his longing for a Rome that had turned out differently, is exactly the point.

Ancient authors seem to have been no more immune than we are to the curiosity provoked by alternative versions of history. Livy’s Alexander digression in Book 9 is a famous example. How would things have turned out for Rome, Livy muses, if she had been forced to reckon with Alexander?¹¹⁹ Rome would have been victorious, he supposes, and outlines the reasons why.¹²⁰ The Alexander digression is explicitly counterfactual and framed as a thought experiment in the same manner as modern essays like those compiled by Ferguson and Black.¹²¹ However, ancient authors seemed to have experimented with more implicit counterfactuals, as well (a point to which we will return below). O’Gorman has convincingly argued that the family tree of Pisones in Tacitus’ *Histories* and *Annals* represent a hypothetical Pisonian dynasty running in parallel to the Julio-Claudian and Flavian dynasties.¹²² O’Gorman likens Tacitus’ invocation of a “virtual history” to a form of declamation, the oratorical last resort of the disenfranchised under the

principate.¹²³ The counterfactual digression seems to be a close cousin of the *suasoria*, in which the speaker positions himself at the side of a Great Man at his critical moment (e.g., Hannibal about to cross the Alps).¹²⁴ With just a little reframing, the elder Seneca's collection of *suasoriae* would read like Part I of Ferguson or Black's recent collections of counterfactual essays; it is a short step from "Should Agamemnon Sacrifice Iphigenia?" to "What if Agamemnon *Hadn't* Sacrificed Iphigenia?"¹²⁵ Like the counterfactual historian, the *suasor* speculates about plausible alternative histories, and raises the possibility of outcomes besides what we know actually happened.

Although *suasoriae* and declamation in general have traditionally been discussed in an imperial context, they had republican antecedents,¹²⁶ and Sallust's use of counterfactual thinking may be seen as a precursor to the formal *suasoriae*. The imperial *suasoriae* offered a form of escapism from the grim realities of political life.¹²⁷ For Sallust, counterfactual history serves a similar purpose, but it is not mere escapist fantasy. As O'Gorman suggests in the case of Tacitus' *Pisones*, Sallust's inability to act on his speculations does not relegate this digression to the realm of "frivolous activity" rather than "serious political discourse."¹²⁸

Sallust himself provides support for reading the Blessed Isles digression from a counterfactual perspective, for he had already experimented with "what-if" historiography in the monographs. For example, in the *Catiline*, Sallust introduces an explicit counterfactual in his account of the so-called First Catilinarian Conspiracy:

Iam tum non consulibus modo, sed plerisque senatoribus perniciem machinabantur. Quod ni Catilina maturasset pro curia signum sociis dare, eo die post conditam urbem Romam pessimum facinus patratum foret.

(*Cat.* 18.8)

At that time, they were plotting destruction not only for the consuls, but also for many of the senators. But if Catiline had not been so quick to give the signal in front of the senate meeting, the most awful crime since the founding of the city of Rome would have been perpetrated on that day.

A terrifying outcome was narrowly avoided because of Catiline's impatience; had he been able to control himself, he might have succeeded in a bloody coup. Sallust uses another explicit contrafactual several chapters later, in a digression about the lamentable state of Roman affairs which Catiline exploited:

Quod si primo proelio Catilina superior aut aequa manu discessisset, profecto magna clades atque calamitas rem publicam oppressisset; neque illis qui victoriam adepti forent diutius ea uti licuisset, quin defessis et exanguibus qui plus posset imperium atque libertatem extorqueret

But if in the first battle Catiline had been victorious or at least walked away no worse off, surely great destruction and chaos would have overwhelmed the republic; for it would not have been permitted to those who obtained victory to enjoy it for very long before someone more powerful wrenched the power and freedom from their exhausted and drained selves.

Here, Sallust imagines that Catiline had won the Battle of Pistoria. If that had happened, he supposes, “someone more powerful” would have taken advantage of the disruption to supplant Catiline, and the result would have been a new form of tyranny rather than peace. Although Sallust does not name the “someone” who would benefit from this discord, it is worth noting that Pompey has just been mentioned at the beginning of section 39.¹²⁹ While it is far from a “smoking gun,” Sallust has certainly made sure that Pompey is on the reader’s mind when considering this frightening alternative scenario.¹³⁰

These examples from the *Catiline* suggest that Sallust was willing to engage with the thought-exercise of “what-if” history. Both of these passages are explicit counterfactuals, in which the “what if ?” is made clear by the past contrary-to-fact conditional construction. No such construction appears in the extant passages of the Blessed Isles digression. However, the absence of formally counterfactual language does not preclude a counterfactual reading here. In fact, implicit “what-if?” thinking seems to have been a regular feature of ancient historiography. Implicit counterfactualism falls under the umbrella of “sideshadowing,” a term introduced by narratologist Gary Saul Morson to describe a way in which authors invoke alternative histories and undermine teleological narratives (versus *foreshadowing*, which reinforces inevitability).

Alternatives always abound, and, more often than not, what exists need not have existed. *Something else* was possible, and sideshadowing is used to create a sense of that “something else.” ... In sideshadowing, two or more alternative presents, the actual and the possible, are made simultaneously visible. This is a simultaneity not *in* time but *of* times: we do not see contradictory actualities, but one possibility that was actualized and, at the same moment, another that could have been but was not.¹³¹

Implicit counterfactuals and sideshadowing are regular features of ancient historiography. As mentioned above, O’Gorman demonstrated the way in which Tacitus “*gestures* toward an alternative history”¹³² of a Pisonian dynasty (emphasis mine) rather than explicitly wondering, “What if this or that Piso had become emperor?” Hindsight and virtual history are the focus of 2013 volume *Hindsight in Greek and Roman History*,¹³³ which examines how ancient historians’ knowledge of the past and historical outcomes shaped their narratives. In particular, contributions on Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius demonstrate these authors’ use of sideshadowing to emphasize contingency

and downplay the notion of inevitability.¹³⁴ With the Blessed Isles digression, Sallust seems to be using this same narrative technique; he invokes both the “actual” (with the rest of his narrative) and the “possible” (with Sertorius’ contemplation of the Blessed Isles).

Even without a formal, explicit counterfactual statement, there are elements of this episode which encourage us to read it through the lens of counterfactuality or sideshadowing. The figure of Sertorius and the Blessed Isles can both be considered models of alterity, and *per se* invoke the idea of other possible worlds and histories. First, Sertorius himself is associated with the idea of alternative worlds. The very act of daydreaming is itself counterfactual; by contemplating escape, Sertorius is engaging in his own game of “what if?” On another occasion, he transforms an escape fantasy into reality. Although the relevant section of the *Histories* has not survived, Plutarch credits Sertorius with the creation of a Spanish *altera res publica*. It was a miniature Rome in exile; there was a “senate” and a “cursus honorum” and schools built on the Roman model to educate local children.¹³⁵ In this case, Sertorius seems to have actually followed through on a counterfactual fantasy and attempted to create a virtual Rome in Spain.

Furthermore, the Blessed Isles are particularly fertile ground for speculative or hypothetical thinking. As the fragments tell us, they are associated with Homeric mythology, and are thus already located in the realm of the fantastical. In the Blessed Isles, things are more or less the opposite of what they are ‘here’: crops spring forth from the earth abundant and flawless without human effort, the weather is temperate year-round, and animals are obedient and docile (plus, there are no snakes).¹³⁶ Depictions from the triumviral period seem to have specifically figured the islands as the locus of a virtual or alternative history free from civil war. In addition to the episode in the *Histories*, the Isles feature prominently in Horace’s 16th *Epode*, a poem which scholars have observed to be in dialogue with Sallust’s *Histories*.¹³⁷ *Epode* 16 addresses triumviral politics straightforwardly and straightaway. “Yet another generation is being worn down by civil wars (*altera iam teritur bellis civilibus aetas*, 16.1–2),” Horace laments, and Rome, which has survived so many and varied external threats, is on the verge of destroying itself (3–10). He exhorts the war-weary Romans to leave these troubles behind and follow him to the islands, where they will find release from their present troubles. Thus, at the time Sallust was writing the *Histories*, the Blessed Isles seem to have offered a way of thinking about alternatives to the discordant world of the triumvirs. Even though they were not a practical solution, they invited consideration of a counterfactual version of Roman history in which Rome was *not* destroying itself in civil war. As a Golden Age-like paradise, the Isles represent everything our world is not; this is precisely their appeal. Invoking

the Blessed Isles thus raises the possibility that if Sertorius had gone there, everything would have been different; perhaps not just for Sertorius, but for all of Rome as well.

What if Sertorius had sailed to the Blessed Isles?

Sallust's description of the Blessed Isles invites us to imagine that Sertorius has indeed – contrary to what we know of history – traveled there. It is as if, by delaying the narrative there, Sallust asks the reader to momentarily forget that Sertorius remained in Spain. This is where we begin to ask *what if* – what if Sertorius *had* abandoned the war and sailed for the Blessed Isles?

At the time Sertorius was contemplating flight to the Blessed Isles, he had been proscribed as an enemy of Sulla, but the conflict had not escalated to the full-scale war it would become; he was a nuisance, not a priority. Sulla had more pressing issues closer to home: he had returned to a city full of opposition sympathizers, and he had great numbers of veterans to settle.¹³⁸ There were also troubles abroad, specifically the lingering Marian resistance in Sicily and Africa, which Sulla assigned Pompey to quash. In the spring of 81 BCE, Sulla sent C. Annius Luscus to dispatch Sertorius; it was later this same year Sertorius was tempted by the islands. Until the spring of 80, when he accepted the Lusitanians' offer to lead their forces in revolt against their Roman governors, Sertorius was a personal enemy of Sulla, but did not pose an obvious threat to the republic. Had Sertorius fled to the Blessed Isles in 81 and abandoned his active resistance to Sulla's regime, an expedition of the magnitude of Pompey's later campaign would have been unnecessary.¹³⁹ Furthermore, the will to pursue him might well have died with Sulla in 78 BCE. During his consulship in 78, Lepidus broadly repealed Sulla's measures; he ordered the return of confiscated land and the recall and pardon of the proscribed.¹⁴⁰ If Sertorius were simply in exile in the Blessed Isles, the senate might have judged it not worth the trouble and expense to pursue him.

However, Sertorius did not flee to the Isles, but rather redoubled his resistance to Sulla by accepting the Lusitanians' invitation. A response was needed, and in 76 BCE Pompey was appointed to the task.¹⁴¹ The proconsular authority granted to Pompey for his command against Sertorius foreshadowed the sort of exceptional honors by which the rest of his career would be characterized.¹⁴² It was in Pompey's favor that neither of that year's consuls was willing to take on Sertorius. Pompey refused to disband his army after the revolt of Lepidus had been settled, and the tacit threat of violence made it impossible for the senate to select anyone else.¹⁴³ Although he was still too young to have stood for any office, all legal requirements were waived and Pompey was granted proconsular authority.¹⁴⁴ The victory over Sertorius led to

several of the most important distinctions of Pompey's early career and arguably opened the floodgates for the unprecedented honors and offices that would define his next two decades.¹⁴⁵

Or did it? The Pompey of the *Histories* does not strike the reader as the sort of person who would sit idly by and wait for opportunities to find him. In his character sketch of Pompey, Sallust described his unbridled ambition:

modestus ad alia omnia, nisi ad dominationem

(2.18 R/2.17 M)

modest toward all other things, except toward tyranny

Sallust also described Pompey's idolization of Alexander and his desire to emulate his career:

sed Pompeius a prima adulescentia sermone fautorum similem fore se credens Alexandro regi, facta consultaque eius quidem aemul[at]us erat

(3.62 R/3.88 M)

But Pompey, believing from his earliest adolescence, because of the discussion among his partisans, that he would be similar to the king Alexander, was an imitator of his actions and plans

The emphasis on Pompey's emulation of Alexander underscores Sallust's earlier remark about Pompey's ambition. The overall picture of Pompey, then, is a man whose *ambitio* would have led him to seek other paths to power should one particular avenue have been closed off to him; if he had not been sent out against Sertorius, there probably would have been another enemy and another opportunity soon enough. As the *Histories* demonstrate, the 70s and 60s suffered from no absence of civil and foreign conflicts in which an ambitious public figure might distinguish himself.¹⁴⁶ If Sertorius had gone to the Blessed Isles and deprived Pompey the opportunity to win glory against him, it thus seems probable that Pompey would still have found a springboard for his career. Or, if not Pompey, then someone else; the political landscape of the 70s was shaped by any number of individuals who, given the opportunity, might have sacrificed traditional institutions just as eagerly for their own advancement.

Like the very idea of escaping to the Blessed Isles, the suggestion that things might have turned out differently turns out to be a fantasy. The counterfactual possibilities provide a momentary escape from the grim circumstances of the present but ultimately crumble under the pressures of reality. Just as Sertorius' hopes for peace and tranquility were raised only to be dashed immediately, so has Sallust's reader temporarily fallen into the trap of optimism. Optimism, of course, was not the message of the *Histories*, and the Blessed Isles

counterfactual episode is not meant to reassure us. On the contrary, this episode highlights one of the *Histories*' most dire implications: the inevitability of civil war and the timeless reality that individual ambition trumps all.

III Implications

Syme was surely correct that Pompey's role in dismantling the republic was a central question of the *Histories*. However, Sallust's objection to Pompey's transgressions extends beyond Pompey himself; the qualities that led Pompey to trample on republican institutions in pursuit of individual glory could – and would – be found in others. For example, Pompey's success at manipulating the senate through implicit threats had set an example from which the young Octavian seems to have learned a great deal. The similarities between Pompey's career and Octavian's are clear enough. Both extorted the senate for reward and titles that were unprecedented or for which they were not legally eligible.¹⁴⁷ Both recast victories against fellow citizens as foreign or non-citizen conflicts in order to enjoy their triumphs (in every sense of the world) without the stain of civil war.¹⁴⁸ Both readily threatened the senate with a renewal of civil war if their demands were not met.¹⁴⁹ Sallust was not alone in recognizing a parallel between Pompey and Octavian. In the *Fifth Philippic*, Cicero made a flattering comparison between the two in an attempt to curry favor with Octavian. Even though Octavian was even younger than Pompey was when Pompey received his first triumph, he had already demonstrated such eminent virtue that he should be granted the greatest rewards, regardless of technical qualifications: "Why, conscript fathers, should we not desire that he obtain the highest honors as soon as possible?" He soon learned the answer. Within two weeks of the creation of the triumvirate and its extraordinary powers, Cicero was proscribed and executed, his life factored into the price of the alliance between Octavian and Antony. At the time of his own death in 35, Sallust must have felt that any imagined parallels were in the process of coming true. He could not have known that the civil wars would give way to the principate; an autocracy, yes, but also a period of relative stability and respite from intestine strife. In 35, Octavian was the *carnifex adulescens redux*.¹⁵⁰

But Octavian was just the latest iteration of ambition gone wrong, and there was nothing inevitable about his particular path; indeed, if odds were taken at the Ides of March, he would have been judged the unlikeliest victor of the triumviral wars. For Sallust, this is partly the point. Pompey was bad, and Octavian was arguably worse; but, human nature being what it is, if it had not been Pompey or Octavian it would have been someone else. This brings us

back around to where we began, with the idea of analogical historiography. As was discussed in [Chapter Two](#), one of the effects of Sallust's allusive method is to underscore the repetitive and inevitable nature of Roman civil war; since the fratricide of Remus, Rome had been plagued by ambitious and self-serving aristocrats who were willing to sacrifice the republic for their own advancement. Through his digressions, Sallust highlights the strong parallels between the triumviral period and the 70s (in the case of Scylla) but also reminds us that there was ultimately nothing special about either Pompey or Octavian; in "so great and corrupt a state" *in tanta tamque corrupta civitate* (*Cat.* 14.1) such a figure was bound to flourish.

Notes

- 1 Syme 1964: 201.
- 2 Pompey appears to enter Sallust's narrative upon his entry into the Sertorian War in 77 BCE. Four fragments from Book Two (2.17–21 R) seem to have been part of a character sketch of Pompey introducing him to the narrative. Maurenbrecher also assigned fragments 2.20–2.22 M to Pompey's entry in the Spanish war. Pompey appears twice more in Book Two: 2.79 R describes the reaction of the inhabitants of the Celtiberian villages upon hearing of Pompey's approach, and 2.86 R is the *epistula Pompei ad senatum*. The Sertorian War is concluded in Book Three. Fragment 3.62 R describes Pompey's emulation of Alexander the Great, while 3.63 gives an account of Pompey's victorious return to Rome from Spain. Pompey does not appear in any surviving fragments of Sallust's account of the Spartacus revolt. He re-appears in our text upon his return to Rome after the suppression of the rebellion, during the campaigning and consular elections for 70 BCE (4.32–41 R). The remaining phase of Pompey's career covered in the remnants of the *Histories* is the debate over and passage of the *lex Gabinia* in 67 BCE; Ramsey assigned six fragments to this episode (5.15–20 R).
- 3 Katz 1982: 83.
- 4 Syme 1964: 212. Syme further suggests that Sallust's "malice" toward and "denigration" of Pompey may have been due to a personal conflict.
- 5 This fragment is preserved with book number by Donatus in his commentary on Terence's *Phormio*, line 170, to illustrate the use of *modeste* as a synonym for *moderate* (*ni unum hoc desit animus qui modeste istaec ferat*, *Phorm.* 170). Maurenbrecher assigns it to a putative character portrait of Pompey upon his entrance into the *Histories* in the narrative of the Sertorian War.
- 6 Forty-two years for plebeians and forty years for patricians were the minimum ages to stand for the consulship; in 71, Pompey was 35.
- 7 Plut. *Pomp.* 17.
- 8 In Plutarch's estimation, the *imperium* amounted to "outright monarchy" and "irresponsible power over all men" (ἄντικρυς δὲ μοναρχίαν ... καὶ δύναμιν ἐπὶ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἀνυπεύθυνον, *Pomp.* 25). Placing so much authority in the hands of one man also created great risk in the event that that one man should be incapacitated or killed, a point which was raised by Catulus in the debate over the *lex Gabinia* (5.20 R/5.24 M, Cicero, *Man.* 59).
- 9 The first was (reluctantly) granted by Sulla for Pompey's victory over the Marians in Africa;

the second was for Pompey's conquest of the Sertorian forces in Spain. Pompey lacked the requisite rank (praetor or consul), and in both cases the defeated were Roman citizens. See Plut. *Pomp.* 14 and 22.

- 10 At the beginning of 43, the nineteen-year-old had been made senator and granted *imperium* equal to the consuls. Although falling shy of the age requirement by half, he was elected consul mid-summer upon the deaths of Hirtius and Pansa.
- 11 See Osgood 2006: 59–64 on the creation of the triumvirate.
- 12 Catiline, of course, is the original *simulator ac dissimulator* (*Cat.* 5).
- 13 For the sake of simplicity, I will hereafter use “geographical digression,” although I acknowledge that most geographical digressions contain ethnographic elements as well.
- 14 Although the examples discussed in this chapter primarily represent geographical digressions, one (the episode of Sertorius and the Blessed Isles) involves a chronological digression, as well; this type of digression will be discussed in more detail below. The essays in Grethlein and Krebs 2012 give a broad introduction to the use of the so-called “plupast” in historiography.
- 15 See Clarke 1999; Dench 2007; Engles 2007; Dueck 2012 for overviews of the role of geographical excursus in the Greek and Roman historiographical traditions.
- 16 Dueck 2012: 38–41.
- 17 As Marincola 1997 observes, the Roman historians appear to have placed less value on autopsy in their geographical and ethnographic digressions (83–85). He concludes that “[a]s for the Romans, there is little interest in geography evidenced by any of their major historians” (84). It is certainly true that the major Roman historians were content to borrow from earlier authors rather than perform their own geographic inquiries, and that they were probably uninvested in geography *qua* geography. However, for the purposes of the present discussion, I should be clear that I am interested in the geographical digression as a literary tool, and not ancient geography as a science or independent pursuit.
- 18 See Badian 1966: 8; Rawson 1985: 26; Dench 2007: 497–498 on Cato; see Rawson 1979: 327, 1985: 26 on Sisenna.
- 19 On the role of geography in Caesar's works, see Rambaud 1974: 111–129; Rawson 1985: 259–263; Riggsby 2006.
- 20 Many have posited that Posidonius was a source for various geographical facts in the *Histories* (e.g., Schur 1934). See Keyser 1991 for more detailed discussion of the source question.
- 21 To be fair, ancient authors also emphasized these purposes, and did not explicitly signal the thematic or symbolic importance of digressions; cf. Cic. *De Or.* 2.63, Tac. *Ann.* 4.33.
- 22 It is perhaps easiest to track changing attitudes toward the digressions in Herodotean studies, since those famous and elaborate digressions have attracted so much scholarly attention. In the 1960s, Immerwahr advanced a convincing interpretation of the digressions, arguing that the “ethnographic *logoi*” were inextricably thematically intertwined with the narrative as a whole. The publication (first in 1980 in French, then in English in 1988) of Hartog's landmark study of Herodotus' digressions as loci of “othering” seems to have signaled some consensus about the thematic importance of digressions. The substantial excursus of Thucydides, Caesar, Tacitus, and Ammianus Marcellinus have now all been the subject of scholarship examining their thematic roles in their respective texts. A full bibliographic review is beyond our scope here; a few exemplars are Schadee 2017 on Caesar's ethnographies, O'Gorman 1993 on Tacitus' *Germania*, and Vergin 2013 on Ammianus.

- 23 Syme 1964: "Not merely elucidation ... but for variety, to register a pause, or to manage a transition" (145).
- 24 Keyser's 1991 dissertation remains the most comprehensive treatment of ethnographic and geographic digressions in Sallust.
- 25 Sallust himself acknowledges the formulaic structure of the digression (although, as ever, I do not think we should simply take Sallust as face value here): *res postulare videtur Africae situm paucis exponere et eas gentis, quibuscum nobis bellum aut amicitia fuit, attingere. Sed quae loca et nationes ob calorem aut asperitatem, item solitudines minus frequentata sunt, de eis haud facile compertum narraverim. Cetera quam paucissimis absolvam*, "The topic seems to require that I say a few words about the geography of Africa and that I touch on the peoples with whom we have had either wars or alliances. I could not easily give an account about those places and peoples which are seldom visited because of their heat, severity, and desert regions. I will sum up the rest as briefly as is possible," *Jug.* 17.1–2.
- 26 Syme 1964: 152; Paul 1984: 71–72.
- 27 E.g., Scanlon 1988; Green 1993; Wiedemann 1993.
- 28 Hardie 2009: 118–147.
- 29 In particular, Powell and Welch 2002; Welch 2012, both discussed in more detail below.
- 30 A full re-assessment of Syme is impossible here. For relevant discussions, Brunt 1988; Welch 2012 are excellent starting points.
- 31 Welch 2012: xv.
- 32 It seems probable that Antonius and Lepidus, as well as others, contributed to this same characterization, but Octavian is the only of these figures to have left us a written record. For the sake of clarity, I will thus focus on Octavian as the author of the claims.
- 33 E.g., App. *BCiv.* 5.72; Cass. Dio 48.19.
- 34 Powell 2002 examines the use of *pietas* in the imagery of Sextus' Sicilian coinage. In addition to stressing his filial *pietas*, Powell argues, Sextus emphasized his *pietas* to the state and fellow citizens, as well. This could be read as a challenge to Octavian, who made an elaborate show of his devotion to the memory of his adoptive father Julius Caesar but would find it more difficult to make the case for his own *pietas* toward the people he had proscribed and who blamed him for the constant threat of famine. I return to this issue below.
- 35 Cooley 2009's commentary on the *RGDA* summarizes the issues concisely; see also Brunt and Moore 1967; Scheid 2007 *ad loc.* Ridley 2003 takes an almost combative approach; the study's *raison d'être* is to prove the thorough mendaciousness of the *RGDA*. Accordingly, he takes Augustus to task for aligning Sextus with slaves while neglecting to mention his own reliance on servile forces.
- 36 E.g., Horace (*ut nuper, actus cum freto Neptunius/dux fugit ustis navibus/minatus Urbi vinclae detraxerat/servis amicus perfidis*, "Just as recently, when the Neptunian leader, driven from the strait, fled in his burned-out ships, having threatened the city with chains which he, as a friend, had stripped off his treacherous slaves," *Epod.* 9.7–10) and Velleius Paterculus (*is tum, ut praediximus, occupata Sicilia servitia fugitivosque in numerum exercitus sui recipiens magnum modum legionum effecerat perque Menam et Menecraten paternos libertos, praefectos classium, latrocinii ac praedationibus infestato mari ad se exercitumque tuendum rapto utebatur, cum eum non depuderet vindicatum armis ac ductu patris sui mare infestare piraticis sceleribus*, "Then, as I have said, when Sicily was occupied, admitting slaves and fugitives into the numbers of his own army, he filled out a great number of

legions and, when the sea had been seized, through Menas and Menecrates (his father's freedmen and prefects of the fleet) he used brigandry and piracy to provide for himself and his army, since it did not make him ashamed to infest with piratical crimes the ocean which had been set free by the arms and leadership of his father," 2.73.3). The epitome of Livy's Book 128 suggests a similar characterization appeared in that text, as well: *cum Sex. Pompeius rursus latrocinii mare infestum redderet nec pacem quam acceperat praestaret, Caesar necessario adversus eum bello suscepto duobus navalibus proeliis cum dubio eventu pugnavit*, "When Sextus Pompey, through brigandage, had returned the sea to a dangerous state, and did not uphold the peace to which he had agreed, Caesar, when the war against him [Sextus] had been undertaken out of necessity, fought in two naval battles with unclear outcome," Per. 128. In the Neronian period, Lucan emphasizes the same aspects of Sextus: *turbae sed mixtus inerti/Sextus erat, Magno proles indigna parente/cui mox Scyllaeis exul grassatus in undis/ polluit aequoreos Siculus pirata triumphos*, "But mixed in with the timid mob was Sextus, a son unworthy of his parent Magnus, whose triumphs he later disgraced, the Sicilian pirate, prowling as an exile in Scylla's waves," (*BCiv.* 6.419–423).

- 37 Hadas' 1930 biography of Sextus remains a useful contribution, even though his more nuanced portrait was overwhelmed by the appearance of *The Roman Revolution* less than a decade later.
- 38 Plut. *Crass.* 10.
- 39 *Nam olim taliae Siciliam coniunctam constat fuisse, sed medium spatium aut per humilitatem obrutum est aut per angustiam scissum. Ut autem curvum sit, facit natura mollioris Italiae, in quam asperitas et altitudo Siciliae aestum relidit*, "It has been common knowledge for a while that Sicily had been joined to Italy, but the connecting span had either been submerged where it was low or torn asunder where it was narrow. Moreover, the nature of the Italian land, which is rather soft, causes it to become eroded where the harshness and depth break the tide against Sicily," 4.17 R.
- 40 This fragment is transmitted by Isidorus in his discussion *De Aestibus et Fretis* (*Etymologies* 13.8.4). However, Sallust is not named, and it is unclear how much of this passage is paraphrase (cf. Reynolds 1991 *ad loc.*: "quanta fide Isidorus Sallustiana verba attulerit incertum"). Part of this passage is also transmitted by Servius ad *Aeneid* 3.420, where Sallust is named (*Scylla ... Sallustius saxum esse dicit simile formae celebratae procul videntibus; et lupi ob hoc ex ea nati esse finguntur, quia ipsa loca plena sunt monstis et saxorum asperitas illic imitatur latratus*). Since the extent to which this wording reflects Sallust's actual language cannot be determined, we should exercise caution in any close philological analysis of this passage, but at the very least it is clear that Sallust described Scylla (and Charybdis) in this excursus.
- 41 Another textually difficult passage (see Funari 1996 *ad loc.*).
- 42 *Pelorum promunturium Siciliae est, secundum Sallustium dictum a gubernatore Hannibalis illic sepulto*, "According to Sallust, the promontory of Sicily is called 'Pelorus' after Hannibal's helmsman, who was buried there" (Servius ad *Aeneid* 3.411/4.20 R).
- 43 According to Plutarch, Spartacus had bought the loyalty of Cilician pirates, with whose aid he intended to seize Sicily, but was betrayed by them and forced to abandon this plan (*Crass.* 10).
- 44 Cicero reproaches Verres for taking any credit for the suppression of the Spartacus revolt on the grounds that the rebels were prevented by Crassus from ever even attempting to sail to Sicily (*Verr.* 2.5.5–6).
- 45 Servius, the primary source for this fragment, purports to quote Sallust directly; see Reynolds

- 1991; Funari 1996 *ad loc.* for other testimonia.
- 46 Or the victory over Salvidienus in 42 alone, depending on the date of the issues; see discussion of dating below.
- 47 Crawford 1974: 91.
- 48 For example, a series of *denarii* depict Pompey Magnus and the personified *Pietas* (RRC 477); an *as* series shows the god Janus bearing two faces of the elder Pompey on the obverse and Sextus himself on the reverse (RRC 479).
- 49 Lowe 2002: esp. 77–86.
- 50 Lowe 2002: 77.
- 51 Vell. Pat. 2.72.5, 77.2, Cass. Dio 47.12, App. *BCiv.* 5.143.
- 52 Powell 2002: esp. 118–127.
- 53 Powell 2002: 123–127; Welch 2012: 188.
- 54 Powell 2002: “It might be thought that with these Sicilian references Sextus was merely making commonplace political moves, such as alluding to his power-base; conciliating local, Sicilian, opinion; reminding potential recruits from the mainland of where he was. However, the message of these coins went deeper” (121).
- 55 Crawford 1974: 742 n.2
- 56 According to Dio, in the celebration over his defeat of Salvidienus, Sextus “assumed a certain reputation and conceit that he was the son of Poseidon, since his father had once ruled the whole sea” (δόξαν τέ τινα καὶ φρόνημα ὥς καὶ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος παῖς ὢν, ὅτι πάσης ποτὲ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ τῆς θαλάσσης ἤρξε, προσέθετο, 48.19.2). Appian makes a similar report: Ὁ δὲ Πομπήιος οὐδ’ ἐπὶ τοιαύτῃ εὐκαιρίᾳ τοσοῖσδε ναυαγίοις ἐπιχειρεῖν ἤξιον, ἀλλ’ ἔθυε μόνον θαλάσση καὶ Ποσειδῶνι καὶ υἱὸς αὐτῶν ὑφίστατο καλεῖσθαι, πειθόμενος οὐκ ἄνευ θεοῦ δις οὕτω θέρους πταῖσαι τοὺς πολεμίους. φασὶ δ’ αὐτόν, ὑπὸ τῶνδε χαυνούμενον, καὶ τὴν συνήθη τοῖς αὐτοκράτορσι χλαμύδα ἐκ φοινικῆς ἐς κυανὴν μεταλλάξαι, εἰσποιοῦμενον ἄρα ἑαυτὸν τῷ Ποσειδῶνι, “Pompey did not think it proper to bother with the lucky opportunity of so many shipwrecks, but rather only sacrificed to the sea and Poseidon and swore to call himself their son, believing that the enemy could not have been driven off twice in the summer without the god. They say that, made haughty because of these things, he changed the color of his cloak from purple (customary for rulers) to blue, signifying that he belonged to Poseidon.”
- 57 See Zanker 1988: 33–77; Osgood 2006: 238–242 on the efforts of the triumvirs and Sextus Pompey to use iconography to lay claim to divine descent or favor. Octavian called upon Venus (as founder of the Julian line), Apollo, and the deified Julius Caesar; Antony turned to Hercules and Dionysus.
- 58 Powell 2002: 121.
- 59 πρὸ τοῦ πορθμοῦ ναυμαχίας ἀμφὶ τὸ Σκύλλαιον αὐτοῖς γενομένης, “A sea battle took place between them in the mouth of the strait at Scyllaeum” (App. *BCiv.* 4.85).
- 60 Cass. Dio 48.18–19.
- 61 Crawford 1974: 521. According to Dio, Sextus certainly believed this was an event worth commemorating; he celebrated the occasion with a staged miniature sea-battle (48.19).
- 62 Cass. Dio 48.47–48, App. *BCiv.* 5.88.
- 63 καὶ ὁ Σέξτος ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον ἤρθη, καὶ τοῦ τε Ποσειδῶνος υἱὸς ὄντως ἐπίστευεν εἶναι, καὶ στολὴν κυανοειδῆ ἐνεδύσατο, ἵππους τε, καὶ ὥς γέ τινές φασι, καὶ ἄνδρας ἐς τὸν πορθμὸν ζῶντας ἐνέβαλε, “But Sextus was even more heartened and began to believe that he was

truly the son of Neptune, and he put on a dark blue robe and tossed into the strait not only live horses but also, some say, even living men” (Cass. Dio 48.48).

64 See Powell 2002: 120–129; Welch 2012 for more detailed discussion.

65 Powell 2002: 31–85 gives an excellent analysis of Sextus and Octavian’s contest over *pietas*.

66 Zanker 1988: 40–41.

67 Zanker 1988: 40.

68 Livy *Per.* 95; Plut. *Crass.* 8; App. *BCiv.* 1.116.

69 Cf. Livy *Per.* 95–96 and Plut. *Crass.* 9.1–6.

70 Diod. Sic. 34/35.2–3.

71 Even if they should have seen it coming, according to Diodorus Siculus: Πρὸ δὲ τῆς κατὰ τὴν Σικελίαν τῶν δούλων ἐπαναστάσεως ἐγένοντο κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν πλείους ἀποστάσεις ὀλιγοχρόνιοι καὶ μικραί, καθάπερ τοῦ δαμονίου προσημαίνοντος τὸ μέγεθος τῆς ἐσομένης κατὰ τὴν Σικελίαν ἐπαναστάσεως, “Before the uprising of the slaves in Sicily several short-lived and minor revolts occurred throughout Italy, as if the *daemon* foreshadowed the magnitude of the impending revolt in Sicily,” 36.2.1.

72 Plut. *Crass.* 9, App. *BCiv.* 1.116.

73 οὐκέτ’ οὖν τὸ παρ’ ἀξίαν καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν ἠνώχλει τῆς ἀποστάσεως τὴν σύγκλητον, ἀλλ’ ἤδη διὰ φόβον καὶ κίνδυνον ὥς πρὸς ἓνα τῶν δυσκολωτάτων πολέμων καὶ μεγίστων ἅμ’ ἀμφοτέρους ἐξέπεμπον τοὺς ὑπάτους, “The indignity and shame of the revolt no longer annoyed the senate, but rather they sent out both consuls because of the fear and danger, as if facing one of the most difficult and greatest conflicts,” Plut. *Crass.* 9.

74 Livy, *Peri.* 96 and Plut. *Crass.* 9.

75 Τριέτης τε ἦν ἡδη καὶ φοβερὸς αὐτοῖς ὁ πόλεμος, γελώμενος ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ καταφρονούμενος ὥς μονομάχων. προτεθείσης τε στρατηγῶν ἄλλων χειροτονίας ὅκνος ἐπείχεν ἅπαντας καὶ παρηγγέλλεν οὐδεῖς, μέχρι Λικίνιος Κράσσος, γένει καὶ πλούτῳ Ῥωμαίων διαφανής, ἀνεδέξατο στρατηγήσειν καὶ τέλεσιν ἔξ ἄλλοις ἤλαυνεν ἐπὶ τὸν Σπάρτακον, “This war had lasted three years and was terrifying to the Romans, although in the beginning it had been ridiculed and regarded with contempt on the grounds that it was a gladiatorial match. When the election of praetors was scheduled, fear struck everyone, and no one stood for election until Licinius Crassus, a man distinguished among Romans in birth and wealth, took up the praetorship and marched against Spartacus with six fresh legions,” App. *BCiv.* 1.118.

76 Plut. *Crass.* 10.

77 Suetonius provides a *terminus post quem*; he tells us that the memoirs ended with the Cantabrian War of 25 BCE (*Aug.* 85.1). On the significance of this end-date, see Rich 2009.

78 See Powell 2009 for full discussion or Smith’s introduction to the author in Cornell’s *Fragments of the Roman Historians* (2013) for a summary.

79 Powell 2009.

80 Although the Italian famine was caused in large part by Sextus’ blockade, the Roman people vented their rage on Octavian and blamed him for refusing to make peace with Sextus (App. *BCiv.* 5.67 and 5.92). Sextus’ popularity was increased by his offer of refuge to the proscribed (App. *BCiv.* 4.85) and the public’s warm memories of his father (App. *BCiv.* 5.99). Dio also notes the widespread animus toward the triumvirs (and especially Octavian) in comparison with Sextus (48.31).

81 Gowing is more willing than Powell to see Appian as a careful critic of his sources on Sextus:

“Appian approached Sextus critically, with an eye to sifting the false from the true, the propaganda from the reality” (Gowing 1992: 205).

82 App. *BCiv.* 5.86

83 App. *BCiv.* 5.87

84 App. *BCiv.* 5.87

85 App. *BCiv.* 5.112

86 App. *BCiv.* 5.110

87 On the dates and organization of the *Epodes*, see Mankin 1995: 10–12; Watson 2003: 20–30. See further discussion of Sallust and Horace’s potentially mutual influence in “The Blessed Isles,” below.

88 Mankin 1995; Watson 2003 *ad loc.*

89 Scholars have observed the hypocrisy of Octavian’s emphasis on the presence of runaway slaves among Sextus’ supporters, and have pointed out the extent to which Octavian, too, relied on slaves among his forces. Sextus indeed welcomed escaped slaves into his cause (Cass. Dio 48.19; Cass. Dio 48.36 and App. *BCiv.* 5.72 on the protections for runaways included at Sextus’ insistence in the treaty of Misenum), but Octavian aggressively recruited slaves as well (Cass. Dio 48.49; Suet. *Aug.* 16.1).

90 We find another possible allusion to Sextus in the Fourth *Epode* (17–20): *quid attinet tot ora navium gravi / rostrata duci pondere / contra latrones atque servilem manum / hoc, hoc tribuno militum?* “What does it matter that so many beaked faces of heavy ships are led against *latrones* and a servile band when this man, this man is a military tribune?” The precise date of this poem is uncertain; for an overview of the problems posed by *Epode* 4, see Mankin 1995: 99–100; Watson 2003: 145–152. If, as is claimed by the ancient commentators, the target of this passage is Pompey Menas, ex-slave of Pompey Magnus and officer of Sextus, the ode is probably set soon before Naulochus. In this case, *latrones* and *servilem manum* refer to Sextus and his navy. As in the ninth *Epode*, Horace here casts Sextus as the basest of men. There is no trace of the noble son of Pompey Magnus here.

91 Much of the scholarship on this episode has focused on the identification of the Blessed Isles with known geographical locations (most commonly the Madeira or Canary Islands); see, e.g., Rebuffat 1976; Spann 1977; Konrad 1994. It is not entirely clear whether the Romans categorized the Blessed Isles as a “real” or “mythological” place. On the one hand, they are associated with Homer’s Elysium (as noted), and also feature in Lucian’s fantastical *True History*; on the other, they are treated as a real geographical location by Pliny in his *Natural History* and by Claudius Ptolemy, the Alexandrian geographer.

92 ταῦθ’ ὁ Σεργώριος ἀκούσας ἔρωτα θαυμαστὸν ἔσχεν οἰκῆσαι τὰς νήσους καὶ ζῆν ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ, τυραννίδος ἀπαλλαγείς καὶ πολέμων ἀπαύστων (*Sert.* 9.1).

93 Aulus Gellius 9.12.22; cf. Nonius 129.9, although there it is incorrectly attributed to the *Jugurtha*. Although La Penna 1963 expressed doubt Maurenbrecher’s assignment of this fragment to the Sertorius narrative based on its lack of transmitted book number and comparison with Plut. *Sert.* 9.1, La Penna and Funari 2015 have, with reservations, upheld this allocation.

94 Nonius 495.40.

95 Servius at *Aeneid* 2.640 and an anonymous commentator at *Georgics* 2.197; corroborated by the scholiast on Horace, *Epod.* 16.41–42: “Oceanus, in quo sunt insulae Fortunatae, ad quas Sallustius in historia dici victum voluisse ire Sertorium.”

96 La Penna and Funari 2015: 302 suggest that the episode was substantial: “*Su questo sogno di*

Sertorio Sallustio si soffermava senza fretta” (hist. 92–95).

- 97 See Chapter One for general discussion of Plutarch’s use of Sallust. On Plutarch’s use of Sallust for the *Life of Sertorius* (and the Blessed Isles episode in particular) see Maurenbrecher 1891: 27–32; Peter 1865: 61–65; La Penna 1963: 219–222, 1968: 263–264; Scardigli 1971; Spann 1987: 155–157; Konrad 1994: xlv–xlv; Funari 1996: 205; La Penna and Funari 2015: 317–322.
- 98 The Blessed Isles comprise a little more than a full chapter of the (relatively brief) *Life of Sertorius*.
- 99 Konrad 1994: 108–110 argues for the authenticity of the episode and downplays Sallust’s authorial intervention. Given the Blessed Isles’ significance in Celtic thought, he claims that an interest in the islands would be consistent with Sertorius’ fascination with all things Celto-Hispanic. Katz 1984: 22–23 also rightly points out that cultivating an association between himself and the Isles would contribute to Sertorius’ self-representation as a quasi-mystical figure (22–23). Still, Konrad is an outlier in his thorough dismissal of Sallustian (and Plutarchean) literary machinations here.
- 100 See, for example, Plut. *Sert.* 11, in which Sertorius claims that his pet white doe is a gift from Artemis and uses her as a tool to manipulate the Lusitanians, who, as barbarians, are “naturally prey to superstition” (γινώσκων εὐάλωτον εἰς δεισιδαιμονίαν εἶναι φύσει τὸ βαρβαρικόν).
- 101 Katz 1984: 19–26.
- 102 García Moreno 1992: 143–148.
- 103 La Penna 1968: 230; McGushin 1992: 165–167.
- 104 Modern scholars have recognized that those purposes surely went beyond the ‘pleasure’ Cicero advised that topographical digressions could provide in a history (*delectationis causa*, Cicero *Inv.* 1.27; cf. *Brutus* 322); on Sallust’s rejection of Cicero’s historiographical prescriptions, see Woodman 1988: 117–128. As Martin and Woodman have noted, historiographical digressions can also serve a structural function, separating parts of the narrative (1989: 169–170, 1996: 168). The Blessed Isles excursus may well have done this, but it is difficult to draw structural conclusions about a fragmentary text. If this were the only function of this digression, Sallust may have more predictably composed a digression on Mauretania, where Sertorius went instead of the Isles. Syme 1964) recognized the value of the digressions for their potential insight to the author’s mindset: “These devices not only illustrate the talents and technique of a writer – some of them may furnish a clue to his innermost preoccupations, since he operates from free choice” (192). More recently, Wiedemann 1993; Oniga 1995; Morstein-Marx 2001 have explored the literary uses of Sallust’s digressions and their function as thematic vehicles.
- 105 Grethlein and Krebs 2012.
- 106 Grethlein and Krebs 2012: 8–11. As is common in recent scholarship, Grethlein and Krebs expand on Hayden White’s more narrow definition of metahistory to include “the kind of implicit auto-reflection of literary texts that in other genres has been studied under the term of meta-narrative. According to this definition, an act of memory that is embedded in a commemorative text can entail a comment on the text’s own representation of the past and thereby open a metahistorical perspective.”
- 107 Evans 2013: xv: “By counterfactuals, I mean alternative versions of the past in which one alteration in the timeline leads to a different outcome from the one we know actually occurred.”

- 108 A recent example in each genre: Amazon Prime's 2015 series "The Man in the High Castle" (based on the Philip K. Dick novel of the same name) is set in 1962, 15 years after Germany and Japan won World War II and divided the globe between their empires; Alix Sobler's play "The Secret Annex" (first produced in Winnipeg in 2014) depicts an adult Anne Frank, who survived World War II and is trying to establish herself in New York as a writer.
- 109 E.g., Stephen King's *11/22/63* (2011), in which a time traveler repeatedly returns to 1963 to avert President Kennedy's assassination in hopes of creating a better future.
- 110 *The Counterfactual History Review* (<http://thecounterfactualhistoryreview.blogspot.com/>) "surveys the world of historical speculation, collecting and commenting upon examples of counterfactual reasoning that have appeared in recent books, journal articles, reviews, and online texts." See also *Uchronia* (www.uchronia.net), "a bibliography of over 3200 novels, stories, essays and other printed material involving the 'what ifs' of history."
- 111 Ferguson 1999: 2.
- 112 Of course, this is exactly why counterfactual history has come into conflict with Christian theology specifically (Ferguson 1999: 25–26) and historical determinism more broadly.
- 113 Counterfactual history has also been denigrated by some historians as useless frivolity and idle speculation at best, or, at worst, "unhistorical shit" (Thompson 1978: 300). In light of the rapid growth of counterfactual scholarship since the 1990s, it is increasingly difficult to dismiss counterfactual history as a 'parlor game' or hobby; it must now be reckoned with as a legitimate genre of historical writing (however speculative its critics believe it to be).
- 114 Wurgaft 2010: 361–383 explains: "By engaging in counterfactual thought experiments, intellectual historians could restore an awareness of sheer contingency to the stories we tell about the major texts and debates of intellectual history" (361). Cf. Black 2008: 2–3.
- 115 "But the business of imagining such counterfactuals is a vital part of the way in which we learn. Because decisions about the future are – usually – based on weighing the potential consequences of alternative courses of action, it makes sense to compare the actual outcomes of what we did in the past with the conceivable outcomes of what we might have done" (Ferguson 1999: 2).
- 116 Tucker, review of Ferguson 1999: 276. This, according to Evans 2013: 33, is why counterfactual history has generally been more appealing to conservative/right wing historians than those further to the left: "Whatever the eddies and countercurrents along the way, the Left has generally believed that the tides of history flow in its favor. Why should left-wing historians regret what did not happen in the past when the future is still theirs?"
- 117 Evans 2013: 125: "Counterfactuals are ironical because, ultimately, they always cast more light on the present than on the past."
- 118 Rosenfeld 2002 takes this perspective in an article exploring "the evolving place of various historical events" in collective memory.
- 119 *Ut quaerere libeat quinam eventus Romanis rebus, si cum Alexandro bellatum, futurus fuerit*, "So that I am interested in seeking what the outcome would have been for the Roman state if it had waged war with Alexander," 9.17.2); see Morello 2002.
- 120 Livy 9.17–19.
- 121 Other examples of explicit counterfactuals or "what if?" musings in ancient historiography and biography include Hdt. 7.139, Polyb. 3.9.8, Livy 2.1.4–6, Plut. *Nicias* 11 and *Pomp.* 46.
- 122 O'Gorman 2006.
- 123 O'Gorman 2006: 293–295.

- 124 Bloomer 2007: “The historical setting made the scene familiar, but no nicety of historical accuracy, no period piece was required. In writing and speaking as a male adviser to a male potentate, the composer had the duty to deliver a coherent exhortation from the known and general outlines of history. Sometimes the history had not happened, as when Cicero is made to choose between burning his writings and being executed by Antony. This is little matter: the speaker is essentially composing a fantasy that is almost dream-like in its insertion of the self as a speaker and agent in the grand past” (301).
- 125 Seneca’s other topics: Should Alexander sail the ocean? Should the 300 Spartans retreat before Thermopylae? Should Alexander enter Babylon, despite having been warned of his imminent death there? Should the Athenians return Xerxes’ trophies, or risk war? Should Cicero beg forgiveness from Antony? Should Cicero burn his writings to win pardon?
- 126 Bonner 1949: 1–31.
- 127 O’Gorman 2006: 293.
- 128 O’Gorman 2006: 296.
- 129 “But after Gnaeus Pompey was sent to the pirate and Mithridatic Wars, the power of the plebs was diminished, and the power of the few increased,” *Sed postquam Cn. Pompeius ad bellum maritimum atque Mithridaticum missus est, plebis opes imminutae, paucorum potentia crevit* (Cat. 39.1).
- 130 McGushin 1977 also sees a potential reference to Pompey: “S. is perhaps pointing to the hopes of such powerful intriguers as Crassus and Caesar, cf. 17.5. A more definite allusion could be presumed, perhaps, to the case of Pompeius, who did have specific hopes that the conduct of the final stages of the counter-measures against Catiline might be transferred to him”: cf. *Schol. Bob.* 134St.; Cassius Dio, 37.43.1; Plutarch, *Cic.* 23.3 (211).
- 131 Morson 1994: 118.
- 132 O’Gorman 2006: 284.
- 133 Powell 2013.
- 134 See especially Emily Baragwanath, “Herodotus and the Avoidance of Hindsight” (25–48), Roger Brock, “Athens’ Sicilian Expedition: Contemporary Scenarios of its Outcome” (49–70), Lisa Irene Hau, “The Shadow of What Might Have Been: Sideshadowing in Thucydides and Xenophon” (71–90), and Felix K. Maier, “How To Avoid Being A Backward-Looking Prophet – Counterfactuals in Polybius” (149–170).
- 135 Plut. *Sert.* 14.
- 136 See, e.g., Hes. *Op.* 171–173; Pind. *Ol.* 2.69–73; Hor. *Epod.* 16.41–66. Cf. *Od.* 4.563–569 on Elysium, with which the Blessed Isles were sometimes identified.
- 137 See Nisbet 1984 on Horace’s awareness of the *Histories*. Watson 2003 points out the similarity between Horace’s and Sallust’s descriptions of the Isles, and notes that “the motive which prompted the contemplated escape is the same in both cases, a wish to be quit of the never-ending cycle of civil wars and destruction” (480). The precise date of this epode is vigorously contested, as is its date relative to the equally fantastical *Eclogue* 4; on dating, see Watson 2003: 486–488 and Mankin 1995: 10–12 and 244–245. Regardless of when, precisely, *Epode* 16 was composed, it certainly falls within the triumviral period and so belongs to the same literary context as the *Histories*.
- 138 Spann 1987: 45.
- 139 Pompey’s letter to the senate suggests that the campaign was expensive: “Sick of writing letters and sending envoys, I have used up all my resources and even my own hopes, while in the meantime for three years barely a year’s expense has been sent by you! By the

- immortal gods! Is it that you think I'm in charge of a treasury, or that I can maintain the army without food or pay?" (*"Fessus scribundo mittundoque legatos omnis opes et spes privatas meas comsumpsi, quom interim a vobis per triennium vix annuus sumptus datus est. Per deos immortalis, utrum censetis vicem me aerari praestare an exercitum sine frumento et stipendio habere posse?"* 2.86.1–2 R)
- 140 Livy *Per.* 90; App. *BCiv.* 1.107; Florus 2.11.23. See also Gruen 1974: 12–13.
- 141 He joined Quintus Caecilius Metellus Pius, proconsul of Hispania Ulterior, who, acting alone, had been ineffective against Sertorius (cf. Plut. *Sert.* 12).
- 142 His command against Sertorius was not Pompey's first exceptional or irregular distinction. In 81 he had browbeaten Sulla into awarding him a triumph for his victory over the Marians and their Numidian allies in Africa. Pompey had not yet held the office of either praetor or consul; he was still too young even to stand for quaestor, the lowest office on the *cursus honorum* (Plut. *Pomp.* 14).
- 143 Plut. *Pomp.* 17.
- 144 Cic. *Man.* 62; Plut. *Pomp.* 17.
- 145 Ancient sources on Pompey's overall career trajectory include Plutarch's *Life of Pompey*, as well as relevant sections of the *Sertorius*, *Crassus*, and *Caesar*); among modern sources, Seager 1979 gives a comprehensive account.
- 146 Sallust may have believed that it was possible to become distinguished in either peace or war (*vel pace vel bello clarum fieri licet*, *Cat.* 3.1), I rather doubt that Pompey would have agreed, and suspect he would have preferred the sort of glory that comes from conquest and warfare.
- 147 E.g., commands (proconsular imperium for Pompey through the *leges Gabinia* and *Manilia*, propaetorian *imperium* for Octavian through the influence of his army), consulships (Pompey in 70 and Octavian in 43), and irregular or non-traditional offices (Pompey's sole consulship in 52, Octavian's role in the triumvirate).
- 148 See Chapter Three.
- 149 From Pompey's letter to the senate: "You are all that's left: unless you help – although I am unwilling, but as I forewarned – my army will cross over from here into Italy, and with it the entire Spanish war (*"Relicui vos estis: qui nisi subvenitis, invito et praedicente me exercitus hinc et cum eo omne bellum Hispaniae in Italiam transgradientur,"* 2.86.10)." Cf. Octavian's march on Rome in 43 (App. *BCiv.* 3.86–94, Cass. Dio 46.43–45).
- 150 The parallel between Pompey and Octavian as *adulescentuli carnifices* is noted briefly by Katz 1982: 77.

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5 Triumviral historiography and the end of history

hac tempestate serviundum aut imperitandum; habendus metus est aut faciundus, Quirites. nam quid ultra? Quaeve humana superant aut divina inpolluta sunt? Populus Romanus, paulo ante gentium moderator, exutus imperio, gloria, iure, agitandi inops despectusque, ne servilia quidem alimenta reliqua habet

(1.49.11 R/1.55.11 M)

In this moment, one must either serve or enslave; one must either feel fear or instill it, Quirites. For what else is there? What of humanity survives, and what of the divine has not been defiled? The Roman people, so recently the guide of nations, now stripped of power, glory, and rights, bereft of the means to govern and despised, do not even hold the rations of slaves.

Although this *cri de coeur* was uttered by Lepidus in Book One of Sallust's *Histories*, we can just as easily imagine the sentiment belonging to the author himself. His final years saw the Roman state shaken to its core by economic crises, famine, factionalism, and civil war. The ranks of the powerful and the wealthy were thinned in gory fashion in the proscriptions, and families were torn apart as brothers, wives, children, slaves were induced by greed or fear to hand over the proscribed; thousands of Roman, Italian, and provincial men were dying in battle; throughout the empire, citizens labored under the astronomical taxes that were levied to fund the carnage. No one in Rome was unaffected, and the suffering had spread like a disease beyond the city throughout Italy. And for what? The triumviral collaboration had led to the defeat of Caesar's assassins, which may have brought some satisfaction to certain parties. But the other triumviral promises – namely, the restoration of the republic (they were designated *IIIviri rei publicae constituendae*, after all) – increasingly appeared to have been made in vain. By the early 30s, when Sallust began the *Histories*, the triumvirate had been renewed once; it was still technically an office with a term limit, but it seemed increasingly implausible that any of the three would willingly relinquish power and hand ultimate

authority back to the senate. In other words, there was no relief in sight.

For Sallust, direct political action had been unavailable since his final retirement after Caesar's death. Even if he still held elected office, it might not have mattered; the senate proved again and again that it was unable or unwilling to resist the triumvirs in any meaningful way. By the time he died in 35, Sallust was probably aware of Octavian's victories at Naulochus in the summer of 36. Sextus Pompey, the sole opponent of the triumvirs to have seemed, at one point, capable of dislodging them, was in flight, maybe already dead. The aftermath of that campaign provided at least one instructive example of attempted rebellion; the triumvir Lepidus' ill-conceived attempt to stir up mutiny after Naulochus ended with his expulsion from the triumvirate. He was spared gruesome punishment but rendered politically obsolete. It seemed that even for those in a position to mount a viable resistance, Octavian and Mark Antony were immovable objects; the only thing that would bring down one would be the other. In a way, then, retirement left Sallust in no worse a position to resist than a political office would have provided.

In the *Catiline*, Sallust had claimed that it was possible to serve the state with words as well as with action, and thus defended his pursuit of history-writing as useful and perhaps even patriotic. By the time he wrote the *Histories*, it may have been no longer realistically *possible* to *bene facere rei publicae*. *Bene dicere* would have to do, and for Sallust, that meant writing history. But how could Sallust use history to comment on the current political climate without the triumvirs simply denying his account or advancing their own, backed up with the implicit threat of violence? As we have seen, Sallust's response to this uncertainty about the value of history was to offer a new type of historiography, one that would eschew direct competition with the triumviral narrative in favor of a subtler attack. He must have perceived that attempting to expose the triumvirs' fictions by writing a competing account of recent history would be ineffective at best and, at worst, potentially dangerous. Writing allusively allowed Sallust to challenge the triumvirs' self-presentation while simultaneously modeling for his readers how they might do the same. The reader who recognizes the historical allusions of the *Histories* is able to see that there are two simultaneous narratives, one explicit and one implicit; what the *Histories* appear to be (an account of the 70s and 60s) is not all that they truly are. Likewise, guided by experience with analogical historiography, a "reader" of the contemporary history being "written" by the triumvirs might become better equipped to evaluate and respond to their false claims.

The *practical* form that response might have taken remains obscure to me. To spend time with the *Histories* is to perceive viscerally the gut-wrenching frustration with which they were produced. The work is steeped in the impotent rage and bleak despair of the author, who must watch helplessly as

the mistakes of the past are played out again to devastating effect. The republic had barely survived Pompey (if, indeed, it truly had), but Octavian was another creature entirely. I admit that it is still not entirely clear to me what, if anything, Sallust believed the *Histories* would plausibly accomplish in the immediate future. Did he expect it to inspire and become the handbook of a resistance movement? Was it simply a rhetorical exercise aimed at like-minded thinkers, with whom he could find solidarity as he screamed into the void? It is hard to imagine Sallust's words accomplishing anything in the face of the triumvirs' reputations, resources, and especially their armies: *res plus valet quam verba*. The *Histories*, with their persistent reminders of civil war's perniciously repetitive nature, often do little to inspire belief in a better future.

Yet there is also a certain – I hesitate to use the word “optimism,” but something akin to hopefulness. However absurd the idea that a history book could become an effective weapon with which to counter tyranny, Sallust devoted the final years of his life to composing a work suffused with criticism of the ruling regime. He did so not without risk. While the triumvirs were far from Neronian in their persecution of literary dissenters, Pollio's quip about not wanting to *inscribere* against those with the power to *proscribere* reminds us that the stakes could still be high. Despite everything advising against it, Sallust carried out his project. In this respect, the *Histories* hover in the same liminal space occupied by the interlocutors of Vergil's first *Eclogue*. Like Meliboeus and Tityrus, Sallust faces two vastly different possible futures. Meliboeus has suffered in the land confiscations and is forced to flee from his home; the displaced herdsman contemplates a bleak future of wandering and exile. Tityrus, on the other hand, has reason to celebrate; he has retained possession of his own land thanks to the intercession of a *deus*, revealed to be a young ruler in the city of Rome (generally identified as Octavian). The same *iuvenis* thus dispensed two very different fates to people in similar circumstances. Sallust perhaps saw a metaphor here: under Octavian's rule, Rome might prosper or it might be destroyed, and it was not yet clear in which direction its fate would unfold. The *Histories* focus on a similarly decisive moment in a previous generation, the years when Pompey's rise could have been forestalled. By analogy, the *Histories* suggest that the time of their composition represents a similar tipping point: if the power of the triumvirs is constrained, there may yet be hope for the survival of the republic in a recognizable form.

There remains the additional possibility that the triumvirs themselves were part of Sallust's intended audience. As was noted in [Chapter Two](#), the relationship between Sallust and the individual triumvirs is unclear. It seems likely that he and Antony had become acquainted during their service under Caesar; if it is true that Sallust composed a triumphal oration for Antony's

man Ventidius, it seems plausible that he remained in Antony's good graces, although this is far from certain. It is difficult to know the extent of Sallust's personal acquaintance with Octavian; the former was well into retirement before the latter embarked upon his public career. Furthermore, Sallust generally avoids openly didactic and exemplary historiography, and his works frequently grapple with the notion that *exempla* have become ineffective tools in the current political climate.¹ Nevertheless, it is possible that the *Histories* could have performed a function similar to that which Christopher Nappa has argued for the *Georgics*; namely, we might see the *Histories* as "an attempt to engage in a constructive dialogue with Octavian on the potential courses available to him and on the potential interpretations of his character, achievements, and motives, which would have been a central concern to the Roman and Italian elite."² Octavian could not have been unaware of the obvious similarities between the narrative time of the *Histories* and his own day, but perhaps Sallust imagined that the sheer aggregation of parallels suggested by his work would have an effect on the young triumvir. The repeated returns to Pompey's transgressive early career might invite Octavian to consider his own rise to power and future path; particularly for the adopted son of Julius Caesar, Pompey's example was one to avoid open comparison with. It was also, perhaps, a reminder that (at least to that point) the republic had weathered the threats posed by dictators and other potential usurpers; civil war came around again and again, but in the end traditional institutions had endured.

On the one hand, I struggle to imagine that Sallust earnestly believed his history would have a salutary impact on a figure who seemed uninterested in (or at least deeply skeptical of) the advice of the "old guard" and who appeared intent upon executing his own vision of the *res publica* at any cost. On the other hand, the *Histories*, like any text, have room for multiple messages and multiple audiences. In the end, the *Histories* did not dissuade Octavian from his course, nor did they awaken a resistance movement against the triumvirs. Sallust died before completing his *magnum opus*, and even if some parts of it were in circulation, it had no discernible practical impact. The triumvirs carried on; predictably, their tensions erupted into full-scale war; after defeating Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian accepted the honorific title "Augustus" and governed as a monarch and an autocrat; he spent the rest of his long life and career ostentatiously parading his commitment to traditional values while at the same time quietly and systematically dismantling republican institutions and whitewashing his transgressive rise to power. This does not mean that the *Histories* were a failure. Sallust did not stop Octavian, but it would be fair to imagine that, like his kindred spirit Thucydides, he imagined his work as a "possession for all time (κτῆμα ἐς αἰεὶ)." A historian as

keenly attuned to history's repetitions and returns as Sallust no doubt expected that some state somewhere would find itself in a similar position again in the future. It is surely clear by now that Sallust's crisis was not, in fact, unique to his historical and political circumstances, but rather a permutation of the kind of dilemma facing all subjects under oppressive or autocratic regimes. This brings us back to where we began in the Introduction. Hannah Arendt posited that this is one of the core principles of authoritarianism and totalitarianism: the ruling regime must legitimize itself by undermining public confidence in traditional institutions and narratives.³ "Organized lying," as Arendt termed it, encompasses the use of deceitful propaganda, deceitful public posturing, and outright fabrications. The only particular in which Arendt's description does not obtain, it seems to me, is her assumption that this is a modern phenomenon; the "traditional" political lie, she suggests, was limited in scope and aimed at deceiving the enemy, not one's own citizens.⁴ Although the modes of information transmission have changed, her description of "modern" political lies strikingly resonates with Sallust's triumphal world:

In contrast, the modern political lies deal efficiently with things that are not secrets at all but are known to practically everybody. This is obvious in the case of rewriting contemporary history under the eyes of those who witnessed it, but it is equally true in image-making of all sorts, in which, again, every known and established fact can be denied or neglected if it is likely to hurt the image; for an image, unlike an old-fashioned portrait, is supposed not to flatter reality but to offer a full-fledged substitute for it.⁵

This is how the triumvirs operated, this is how fascism operated, and the practice of the modern political lie persists into the twenty-first century particularly as a tool of despotic regimes. Since the *Histories*' publication, there has been no shortage of opportunities to apply the lessons of Sallust's κτήμα ἐς αἰεὶ. Organized lying may threaten to put an end to history as a field of inquiry by rendering the independent historian obsolete.

Nevertheless, history persists. Sallust's historiographical method is as timeless and broadly applicable as his message. At least one famous modern reader of Sallust seems to have either internalized or consciously imitated Sallust's analogical historiography. Sir Ronald Syme's *The Roman Revolution* is first and foremost a rigorous and ambitious study of the figures and events of the republic's final decades, but critics have also long recognized in it an implicit commentary on the politics of Syme's own day. It has often been remarked that the influence of Tacitus is evident in both Syme's prose style and worldview, but it seems evident to me that Sallust had a profound impact, as well. Sallust and Syme saw the same Octavian, "a cruel and duplicitous politician who deliberately destroyed the Roman republic while announcing that he was restoring it."⁶ Syme also saw frightening echoes of the dark

triumviral years in his own world. Living in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s he witnessed the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy and observed (with consternation and even horror, we can imagine) the Fascist Party's deployment of the classical world in its propaganda. Mussolini's appropriation of Augustus as a political ancestor was chillingly apt. While the dictator invoked Augustan order and prosperity to glorify his own regime, it was the parallels with the *Pater Patriae's* earlier career as Octavian that stand out to the reader of *The Roman Revolution*: the oppressive violence and military aggression, the cult of personality and gradual concentration of power leading to totalitarianism, the use of propaganda to justify their actions and deceive the citizenry. This cannot be coincidence, as Hugh Lloyd-Jones suggests: "Living in the Thirties, and hearing Mussolini haranguing the mob from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia, Syme would appear to have reached the conclusion that constitutional niceties, fascinating as they were, signified less than the realities of power."⁷ Syme himself invited speculation about his work's allusive commentary on contemporary events, closing his preface with a subtle cue to the reader: "[The present volume] has not been composed in tranquility; and it ought to have been held back for several years and rewritten. But the theme, I firmly believe, is of some importance."

While *The Roman Revolution* did not, of course, bring fascism to an end, like the *Histories* it demonstrated its author's enduring belief in the value of writing history even – or especially – in the face of autocracy. Sallust was too late to intervene in the career of Pompey, whose rise to prominence inflicted such damage on (what then remained of) the republic. He may have also known that his effort to call attention to Octavian's similarly dangerous ascension was both too little and too late. However, Sallust also knew that, human nature being what it is, the world would undoubtedly reckon with a similar crisis again sometime in the future. Rather than despairing in silence, he spent his final years composing a work which could serve as a model for ensuring the continuation of history under those who would appropriate it for their own means. Despite their often bitter pessimism, the *Histories* represent an imperfect but enduring belief in the relevance and value of historiography.

Notes

1 Cf. *Jug.* 4.6–7, Lepidus at 1.49.2–3 R/1.55.2–3 M.

2 Nappa 2005: 1–2.

3 Of course, one of the great ironies of Octavian/Augustus' rule is how successfully he played both sides of this issue; he at once discredited those who genuinely sought to preserve republican institutions against triumviral overreaching while simultaneously portraying himself as the true defender of traditional values and customs.

- 4 Arendt 1968: 253.
- 5 Arendt 1968: 252.
- 6 Bowersock 1980.
- 7 Lloyd-Jones 1980.

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